Marxism Today

May 1986 85p

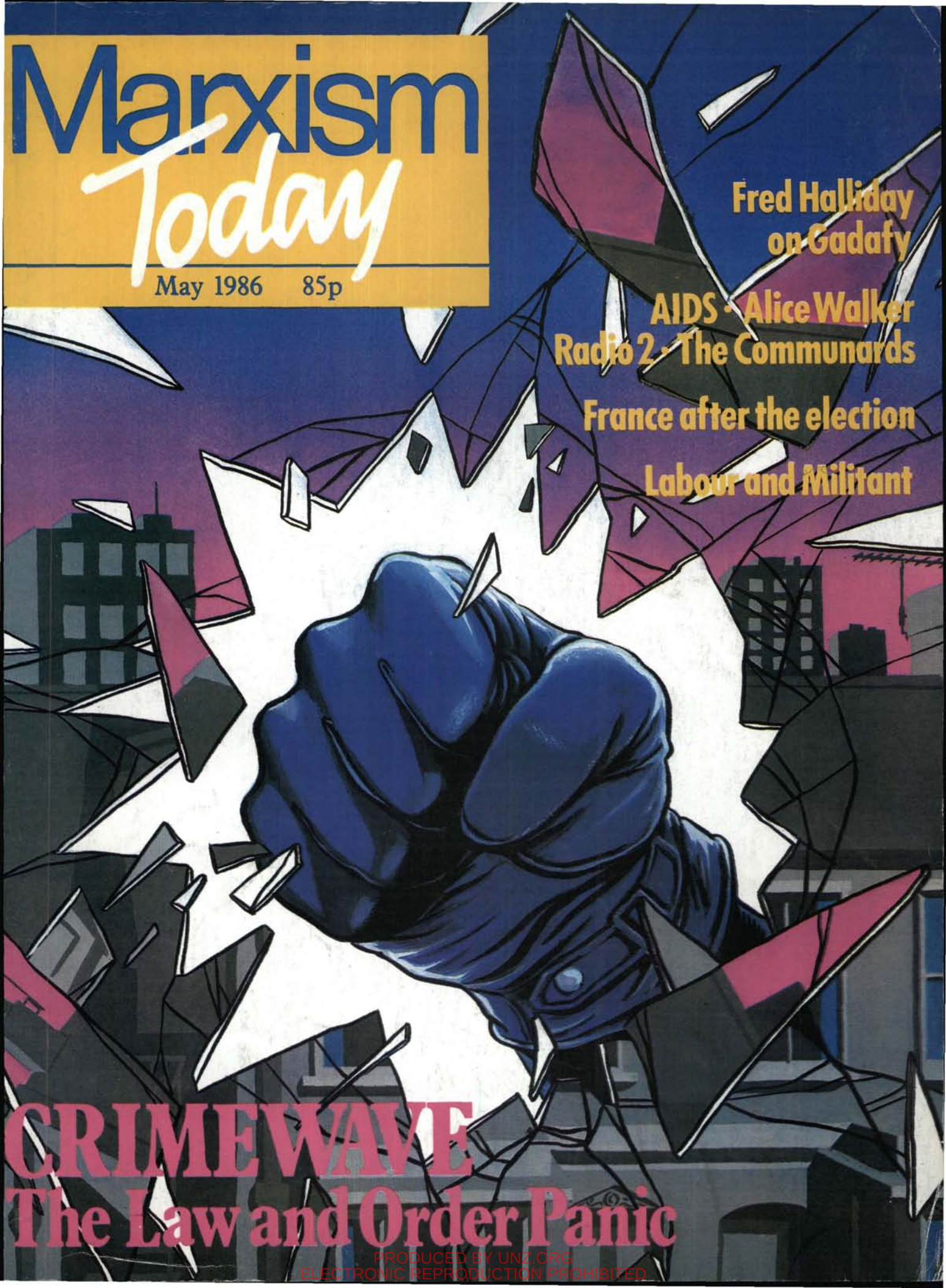
Fred Halliday on Gadafy

AIDS · Alice Walker

Radio 2 · The Communards

France after the election

Labour and Militant



CRIMEWAVE

The Law and Order Panic

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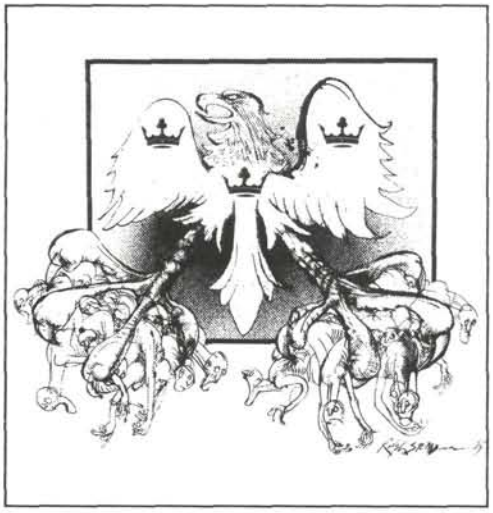
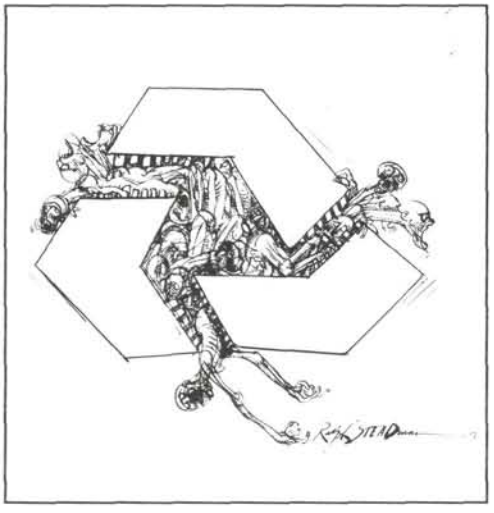
Charged with human suffering.





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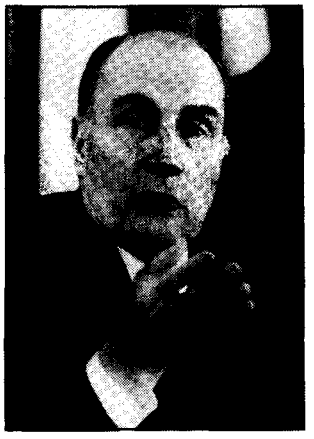

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focus

Libyan distractions

American harassment of Libya, intensified this March and April by the naval and air manoeuvres off the Libyan coast and the subsequent bombing raids, is part of the comprehensive new Third World strategy now being implemented by Washington under the banner of 'the Reagan Doctrine'. Although the elements of this Doctrine were put into operation as soon as Reagan came to office in 1981, it was only in 1985, in his 'State of the Union' address, that it was spelt out in clear and official terms.

In essence, it has at least four components. One is the increased supply of arms and financial support to Third World regimes facing revolutionary insurgencies. US military aid to the Third World has increased at twice the rate of economic aid since 1981, and its use in countries like El Salvador has been for directly counter-revolutionary endeavours.

The second component is aid to groups seeking to overthrow revolutionary regimes in the Third World, particularly those allied to the USSR. Of the eight anti-communist insurgencies now taking place, four at least receive US support: those in Cambodia, Afghanistan, Angola and Nicaragua. The four others – in Laos, Ethiopia, Mozambique and Surinam – could be candidates in the future.

Nick Davies

The third component of the Reagan Doctrine is the active manipulation of revolutionary situations, in such a way that last-minute political changes are used to dam popular advances. The lesson drawn from the fall of the Shah in Iran and of the Somozas in Nicaragua was that the US should intervene behind the scenes to remove the dictator but save the regime, and in particular the army. This is the ploy which has now been tried in Sudan, Haiti and the Philippines, and, in a different way, in El Salvador.

These three elements of the Reagan Doctrine constitute a wide-ranging counter-revolutionary strategy, but one that does not directly involve US forces in combat. In a situation where the US public and Congress are not yet willing to sustain serious combat casualties in Third World situations, this is a policy of counter-revolution on the cheap.

But the problem with it is that it relies on some objective factors to be put into operation. Libya does not provide such conditions. While Gadafy is an easy enough figure against whom to mobilise Western opinion, there is no active insurgency within Libya for the CIA to back, and the obvious regional ally to substitute for the USA in harassing Libya, namely Egypt, has till now been reluctant to do so. There is an opposition inside Libya, of a radical Islamic variety, and the unspoken irony of the situation is that if the Libyan regime as a whole were overthrown it would in all probability be replaced by one more like that of Iran.

Faced with the compulsion to show pugnacity in the Third World, and the lack of appropriate surrogates, the USA has had to steam in itself. But this leaves open the question of what harassing Libya is meant to achieve. It may be that the US naval manoeuvres and direct military strikes will set in train a process that will culminate in the removal of Gadafy. But such actions on their own will not unseat Gadafy, who has a well-organised security system: the under-publicised side of the whole story is that in the first years after he came to power in 1969 Gadafy received protection from the CIA itself.

Like many of Reagan's other Third World initiatives, the campaign against Libya has political as much as military functions. For it provides an ideal opening for the playing out of the fourth component of the Reagan Doctrine, namely 'anti-terrorism'. This now fashionable activity provides a spurious legitimation for attacking any Third World opponents that the USA dislikes, and serves as a suitable cover for the fact that the CIA under William Casey has now become the largest promoter of terrorism in the world through its aid to counter-revolutionary insurgencies.

Nick Davies

One nefarious consequence of this US campaign is that it has cast Gadafy in the light of progressive anti-imperialism and enhanced his status in the Third World. The point that all the right-wing propaganda about him obscures is that Gadafy is of greatest danger not to the USA but to the revolutionary forces in the Middle East itself. He it was who aided the Sudanese counter-revolution in 1971, promoted the invasion of South Yemen in 1972, and fostered the split in the PLO in 1983.

Gadafy has been a thoroughly unreliable ally for progressive forces in the region, and has done more than any other contemporary Arab leader to confuse and discredit the Palestinian cause by the brazen anti-semitism of his opposition to Israel. Perhaps the greatest indictment of all is that he has done so little to provide a credible alternative to the increasingly oppressed population of Egypt, his neighbour on the east. Gadafy's vicious campaign against 'stray dogs', his term for political opponents, and the assassinations at home and abroad, are all part of

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his grotesque and dangerous politics.

Herein lies the real truth of Gadafy's confrontation with the USA. The verbal hype and posturings over territorial waters are of no practical significance whatsoever, and indeed provide an ideal excuse for US actions in the region. Like Khomeini in the hostages crisis, Gadafy practises an 'anti-imperialism of fools', one that diverts energies and attention from the real problems facing the Middle Eastern peoples and channels them into theatre and demagogy.

It seems as if, for reasons of naive idealism, or mercenary attachment, sections of the European Left have taken Gadafy seriously. The time to do so is when he makes a contribution to the liberation of the Arab peoples on land and ceases his diversions on the waves of the Gulf of Sirte.

Fred Halliday

The Militant dilemma

The enquiry by Labour's national executive into the affairs of Liverpool Labour party has been conducted under the full glare of the media spotlight. The original events that sparked off the enquiry – the sacking of the council labour force and well-documented allegations of intimidation – have been almost forgotten in the media's, and Militant's, efforts to portray an epic struggle between Right and Left, leadership and rank and file. And indeed the Hatton v Kinnock bout, at times so deeply evocative of the amateur boxing milieu favoured by Liverpool's deputy leader, has now assumed its own momentum.

But, as the court rulings and dramatic walk-out by those dubbed the 'unmagnificent seven' by Neil Kinnock showed, the Liverpool case has thrown into sharp relief a whole series of dilemmas for the Labour party.

For starters the disciplinary procedures are an obvious mess. You don't have to be in favour of using them very often to accept that regular intervention by the courts is hardly helpful. Militant supporters have not only been to court over the Liverpool enquiry but also in a less well-publicised series of cases where local parties have sought to expel them. Cardiff, Penarth, Mansfield, Stevenage, Ipswich and Exeter parties have all been brought to court by members resisting expulsion, not all of whom are connected with Militant.

Plans are therefore in hand to draft a new disciplinary code which aims to be impregnable to any courtroom challenge. Its supporters will point to the clear contrast between the Labour and most union rule books which contain clear disciplinary guidelines. It will have to take on board the various rulings on natural justice made by the courts and in particular those made by the high court, the day before the NEC's abortive Liverpool hearings, that those making initial inquiries should not then preside in judgement and that confidential evidence should not be used.

One solution to this would be to revive the idea that has been kicking round the party for some years that the NEC should abandon its judicial and appeals role in favour of some new body established to perform these functions. Indeed some have suggested that there is no need for there to be one national body, inevitably a focus of media attention, and these powers should be devolved to regions. Cases such as Liverpool's would be presented to these new independent bodies by party officers acting on the NEC's instructions, not by the NEC itself.

No doubt such moves would be opposed by the NEC members who walked out, but there would be little problem in getting them through conference. The two leading left-led unions, NUPE and the TGWU, would be sure to support them and indeed, the T&G's Ron Todd, with the support of his executive, was swift to condemn the walk-out. Militant have failed to win any Labour regional conference votes, going down by a 17 to 1 margin at one, indicating that they are not winning much support over Liverpool outside their own ranks.

But many on the Left are deeply ambivalent about this. At one level it has become clear that the tactics and practices of Liverpool district party as revealed by both minority and majority NEC reports, and the evidence of Merseyside Labour Co-ordinating Committee, NUPE and the Black Caucus, have shocked many ordinary party members with a natural antipathy towards expulsions. But at the same time the rank and file do not want to see a purge conducted on the basis of political belief. The expulsion of two members in Roy Hattersley's constituency and the particularly striking case of Andrew Wilson chucked out of Middlesborough CLP on what are widely regarded as trumped-up charges, which include using a union duplicator for election material as opposed to an NGA printshop, have worried many and certainly brought back to mind memories of the bad old days of the 50s when tight discipline was used to deal with the mildest dissent.

And without the consent of significant sections of the Left, expulsions could be more trouble for the Labour leadership than they are worth. David Blunkett, for example, was prominent at Neil Kinnock's side at the press conference after the abandoned NEC, but earlier in the year refused to back a Sheffield constituency's expulsion of a Militant supporter where no evidence of rule breaking had been offered.

There is every sign therefore that Liverpool is likely to be a one-off nationally initiated action. Being seen to deal with Derek Hatton has boosted the party's image, but a continuing media spotlight on internal affairs will inevitably deflect from the party's major new Freedom and Fairness campaign that seeks to build positive support for democratic socialist values across a range of social policy questions. But at the same time local parties with evidence of rule breaking will get the go-ahead for expulsions. Hard left resistance will be brushed off, but the worry that the Right will go overboard and declare open season in parties it controls, thereby provoking charges of a real witch-hunt from the great mass of the membership, ought to figure prominently in Neil Kinnock's thinking.

Nigel Stanley

photo: Camera Press

Ted Grant, Militant's guru and already expelled from the Labour party.

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photo: Camera Press

A massive turnout for the Belfast rally to protest at the Anglo Irish Agreement.

A summer of sound and fury

Is Protestant Ulster ready to abandon the union with Great Britain? That is the question at the heart of what promises to be a violent and bloody summer. But the answer, at this stage, looks like a resounding 'no'.

Ulster's Unionist community is bitterly resentful over the Thatcher government's unprecedented determination to impose conditions on Ulster membership of the union with Great Britain. But the only real options are to stay or to go. And where could they go? After 13 years of political paralysis, Unionists have no leaders to point out a promised land and a route to it – all that remain are the pathetic figures of James Molyneaux and Ian Paisley who have seen the writing on the wall but so far have lacked the courage to read it out aloud.

So the coming summer looks like bringing a lot of sound and fury. It takes only a few, a very few, to create mayhem in the province and, as the organisers of the 1974 Ulster workers strike discovered to their amazement, the mayhem quickly gathers a momentum of its own. Some in Northern Ireland really believe that in 1974 the might of Protestant Ulster forced the British government to back down, and that the same can be achieved in 1986. More profess to believe it. But those most closely involved, many of whom are still around, know the true story of chaos and lack of organisation, of day-to-day decision-making that suddenly coalesced because the Wilson government took it seriously and offered no resistance.

Government ministers, presumably keen to downplay the extent of popular support for the current violence, estimate that the spate of attacks on the homes of members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary is being organised by a small group of paramilitaries – 40 men at most. The number may be larger. But it is clear that this sort of tactic, like the thuggish intimidation evident during the March one-day strike, does not attract widespread support; on the contrary, it repels the conservative Protestant majority.

That is a risk some, though not all, the paramilitary protagonists are prepared to take. Their objective seems quite clear – to undermine morale in the RUC to a point where the police can no longer be relied upon to defend the rule of law. Northern Ireland cannot be governed without the RUC, as the British government recognises only too clearly, and the RUC can be pushed only so far. How far has yet to be tested – the indications are that it is a lot further than the paramilitaries estimate.

The massive recruitment drives of the mid- and late-70s, and the widespread reorganisation of staff under the present chief constable, Sir Jack Hermon, have left the extreme loyalists with very few friends in mid-level, let alone high, places in the force. And in the mid-1980s the RUC is one of the very few institutions left in the province offering steady employment, good career prospects, high pay and plenty of overtime.

The strain of continuing to live in a community with which they are continually in conflict may prove too much for some individual members of the force. And if the force as a whole were to crack, the government would have to look beyond the immediate sending in of troops to a major reassessment of its policy. But at this stage that looks most unlikely. Most likely is the possibility that the RUC will emerge from a summer of confrontation with loyalist extremists looking more like an impartial police force than it ever has before. Who knows, it may even win some grudging respect from the Nationalist community.

Indeed the possibility that the present campaign of violent resistance may backfire appears to have presented itself to a number of political and paramilitary leaders. The highly ambiguous stance adopted by Andy Tyrie, leader of the Ulster Defence Association, let alone Ian Paisley and Peter Robinson of the Democratic Unionist party, suggests that privately they have almost as little confidence in such tactics as their public position would indicate.

The prevailing tactic in Ulster this year seems to be that of lying low and giving your opponents as much rope as possible in the hope they will use it quickly. The government hopes the extremists will have hanged themselves by the autumn, so that serious negotiations over devolved government and power sharing can at least begin before the next elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly.

The Unionist party leaders indicated at their meeting with Mrs Thatcher earlier this year that they were ready to begin talking. How they were outmanoeuvred and nudged

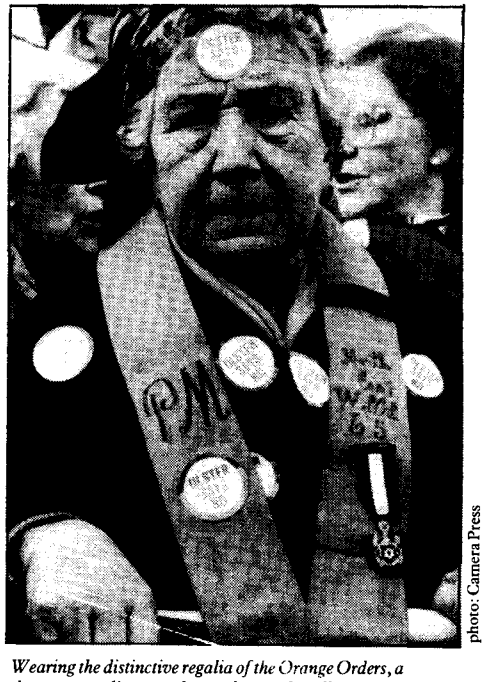

photo: Camera Press

Wearing the distinctive regalia of the Orange Orders, a demonstrator listens to the speakers at the rally.

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into supporting the one-day strike – mainly by Peter Robinson – is now a matter of record. They too, however, appear to be keeping their heads down, waiting for the storm to blow over and their would-be successors to overreach themselves – possibly in the hope of picking up the reins again in the autumn. Certainly they are not expected to talk much sense before then; and while the government is anxious to appear receptive and available for talks, even to offer fig leaves if the Unionist leaders want them, it is unlikely to offer any substantive concessions or incentives while the loyalists are in their present mood.

The prospect, then, is for a very rough summer – with a small number of loyalist extremists causing mayhem on the streets and the Unionist majority staying well out of the way and keeping its head down. Serious attempts to get talks on devolution started may well be made in the autumn.

But the long-term prospects are no rosier. The Unionist community does not trust the leaders it elects, and appears incapable of producing a leader it can trust. Much as the British and Irish governments, even the Nationalist community, would like to do business with the majority community, there is no one there strong enough to be able to deliver on any commitments. Equally, there is no one there strong enough to lead Ulster out of the union into an independent position from which it can fearlessly negotiate stable and lasting relationships with both London and Dublin. Such a position is where the logic of the present Unionist position inevitably points. But it is easier, and in the short term safer, to do nothing.

Margaret van Hattem

Crisis in education

Over the last two months education, very unusually, has been headline news in all the media – often making the front page both in the popular and the quality newspapers. What has happened, and what is it all about?

There are clear links with the crisis in the Tory party following the Westland affair, the resignations of Heseltine and Brittan, and the consequent slump in popular support, highlighted by some fairly dramatic opinion polls and confirmed by the Fulham by-election. Within this there is the clear drive by Margaret Thatcher, and that section of the party that supports her, to restore her personal credibility – to find an issue with a wide populist appeal, and so divert attention from divisive issues where clear differences continue to receive public attention and widespread media coverage.

'Thatcher will defy critics in manifesto' was the headline of the main news story in *The Times* on 10 March – and 'Election retreat ruled out'. 'Cabinet level sources' (Bernard Ingham perhaps?) are credited with the 'news' that the prime minister intends to fight her third-term election on 'a radical Conservative manifesto' which will 'defy the growing cabinet and party demands for a retreat on vintage Thatcherism'. Further it is firmly claimed the party's manifesto 'will not be a matter for discussion by the cabinet' – or anyone else, apparently.

And the main issue? 'Downing Street sources' have confirmed that the prime minister wants to attack 'problems of education' as a priority, first, by introducing a 'credit' (or voucher) system 'which would enable parents to choose between the state or private schools'; second, by establishing direct grant (or centrally funded) primary schools in inner city areas.

This was how education was put at the top of the agenda two months ago – and has remained there ever since, fuelled by further 'radical' proposals – for instance, to 'denationalise' the whole system of schooling (Oliver Letwin, until recently of the prime minister's policy unit, in *The Times*); or to extirpate any control by local authorities over their own systems (Ronald Butt *The Times* 27 March).

In the meantime the temperature has risen for other reasons as well. Keith Joseph's announcement that he proposes to step down as Secretary of State has resulted in an open power struggle within the Tory party for the succession. Tory right-wing backbenchers, organised in the 92 club (there are less of them than that) are boosting the egregious Rhodes Boyson – who certainly played a key populist role in the return of the Thatcher government in 1979. Patten, the present junior minister, is fighting back; each is making policy statements about the future in education to add to the raucous voices now fighting for attention. In the meantime the annual conferences of the main teachers' unions, held over Easter, have dramatically expressed teacher opinion on central government initiatives. When the NAS/UWT, the second largest union, listened to Joseph's invited address in total silence, the Secretary of State was forced to endure what was probably an unprecedented, and certainly a sobering experience. The alienation of the teachers from government policies (and by no means only on salaries) now goes very deep indeed.

The 'manifesto' policies for the Tory party now being put forward by different groupings or individuals (even though the election may not take place for two years) take two main directions. First, privatisation – hence the credit or voucher schemes are being revived (though widely considered both expensive and impracticable). Others propose the selling off of whole groups of what are now publicly maintained schools to industry or other private companies, though it is difficult to see how these could be made to yield a profit (a *sine qua non* of privatisation) unless government money handed out to the 'customers' (parents) covers not only the cost of schooling but is sufficient to yield also a substantial profit margin for the hoped-for educational entrepreneurs.

The second line, recently threatened by Patten, is for greatly strengthened central government control of education. Hence the idea of 'direct grant' primary schools, now elevated (according to the usual 'sources') to the proposal to establish 50 or 60 so-called 'Crown' schools which would embody all that is best in existing practice, according to Joseph/Thatcher criteria. This direction of policy has now been enhanced in Patten's suggestion for a general shift to direct central control over the system as a whole (in his notorious 'yob society' speech).

What all this has to do with what is going on in the schools *now* is difficult to see. What it has to do with is the *politics* of education – and with a vengeance. Education has suddenly become the pawn in a set of political manoeuvres – in what may prove to be the death agony of Thatcherism. Joseph is now clearly set on a collision course with the teachers over the new 16 plus exam, the GCSE. The increasingly threatening tone of his public pronouncements (for instance in his *Daily Telegraph* article of 8 April) and of those of Patten will do nothing whatever to resolve the very real problems facing education. On the contrary, they will exacerbate them.

Thatcherite Tories, Joseph and Thatcher herself are becoming increasingly desperate, and are now clearly playing for high stakes. They believe that another populist, anti-teacher (and anti-public education) movement may win back their lost popularity. They are likely to receive a dusty answer.

Brian Simon

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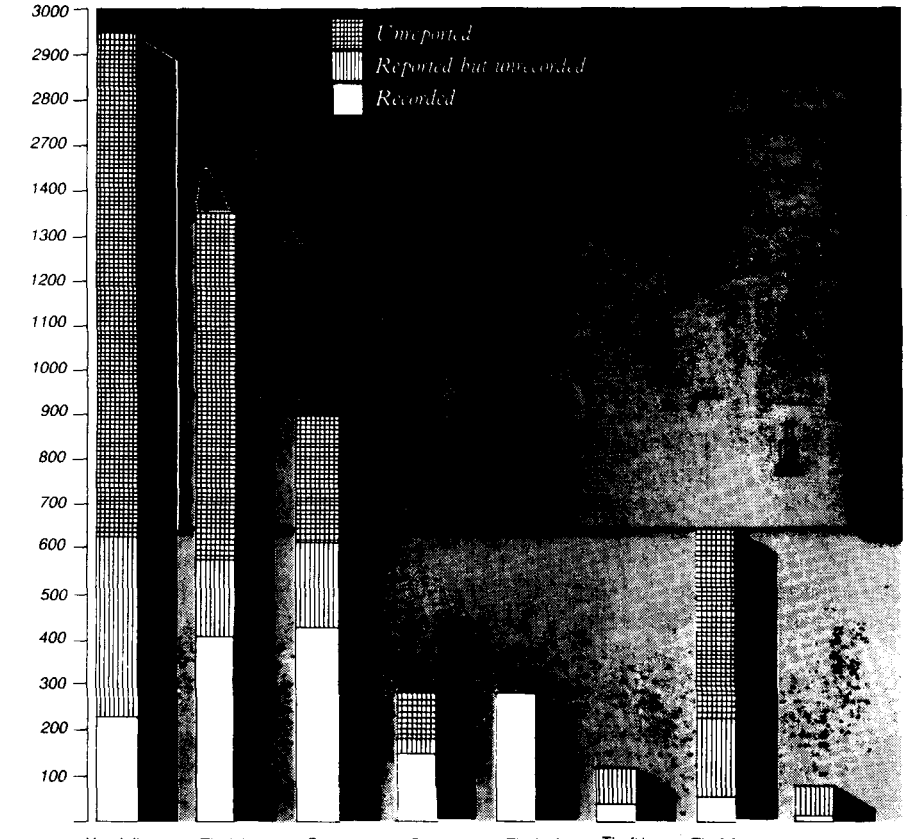
CRIME IN THI

Crime is on the increase. Thatcher's 'law and order' measures have failed miserably. But the Left can't ignore the problem either.

Richard Kinsey

ONE GLANCE at the graph of 'notifiable' offences shows just how dramatic and unprecedented has been the rise in recorded crime over the last 20 years. Since Mrs Thatcher's 'law and order' election of 1979, there has been a staggering 40% increase in recorded crime in England and Wales. Even these figures, however, obscure the reality. The introduction of national crime surveys by the Home Office[1] has confirmed that the level of unreported crime far exceeds that which is made known to the police (see Figure 2).

Furthermore, by counting crime this way – that is, by taking a representative sample of the population and asking directly what crimes had been committed against them – the argument that the 'moral panic' about crime is nothing more than a political smokescreen, behind which the strong state tools up, has just as surely been nailed. Certainly the present level of crime has been used, quite cynically, as a pretext for the denial of political and civil liberty – as we have already seen with the Police and Criminal Evidence Act and will shortly see again with the Public Order Act. But, the British Crime Surveys (BCS) also show that, recently at least, crime has risen pretty much in line with police claims. Thus, in comparison with the 12% increase recorded by the police, the BCS showed that, between 1981 and 1983 alone, there was a real increase of 10% in crime generally and of 20% in burglary.



Source: Taking Account of Crime: Key Findings from the 1984 British Crime Survey

Figure 2 Levels of recorded and unrecorded crime, 1983: British Crime Survey estimates

Crime – especially in the urban centres of Britain – really is a problem. What needs to be stressed, however, is the type of crime involved. As can be seen from Figure 2, far and away the most common crimes in Britain are household and property offences – burglary, theft from motor cars, vandalism etc. Violent crime, in comparison, is really very rare and *not*, by any means, a particular feature of urban life: for example, Glasgow, with the exception of robbery, has lower rates of violent crime than the rest of Scotland. Much the same is true in Merseyside, where violent crime varies little from the national average – burglary, in contrast, is three times the national average.

Of course there are problems with such figures, domestic violence and violence against women are notoriously difficult to chart – even with the more sophisticated survey methods now used, many women are reluctant, embarrassed or afraid to report offences. (From other research we know that such offences are very much more commonplace than police statistics and survey results indicate.)

Even so, the rise in crime presents Mrs Thatcher with an acute political problem. After all, she came to power promising to win the fight against crime but, on any objective criteria, she has patently lost it. However, the real losers are not Mrs Thatcher and the Tory voters of the mid-

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CITY

dle class suburbs, but the working class communities of the inner city and outer council estates.

A problem for the poor

Local crime surveys, such as those recently carried out by the Labour councils in Merseyside and Islington, have shown that it is the poor – not the rich – who are most at risk to crime[2]. In parts of inner city Liverpool, for example, as many as one household in four is burgled every year – eight times the level found in the better-off areas of the county. Rates of vandalism, car theft, theft from the person – all are much higher where deprivation is highest. In such areas women and black people face the additional risks of sexual harassment and racist attacks. In Islington, for example, over two-thirds of women under 25 complained of being kerb-crawled and sexually harassed on the street – again such incidents are virtually unheard of in the 'respectable' commuter suburbs.

This is not to say that crime is just a problem for the poor. In better-off areas of Merseyside, for example, about a third of those interviewed reported crimes of some sort committed against them in the past year. However, in the inner cities and outer council estates far more people (about 50%) are victimised far more regularly – often two, three or four times a year. As the surveys have shown, the offences are more serious, their impact is more severe and the anxiety caused by crime greater.

But the situation is further compounded. For not only is crime much higher in the inner cities, the police are hostile and appallingly inefficient – in some parts of inner London, for example, only 4% of burglaries are cleared up. Police injustices – violence, racism and sexism – are widespread. The Islington survey, for example, estimates some 400 cases of police assault per annum. In the meantime, the poor pay more for household insurance; social services are cut; Mrs Thatcher tells people to stop acting like 'moaning Minnies' and – for daring to speak out about police racism – Bernie Grant is pilloried as 'the enemy within'.

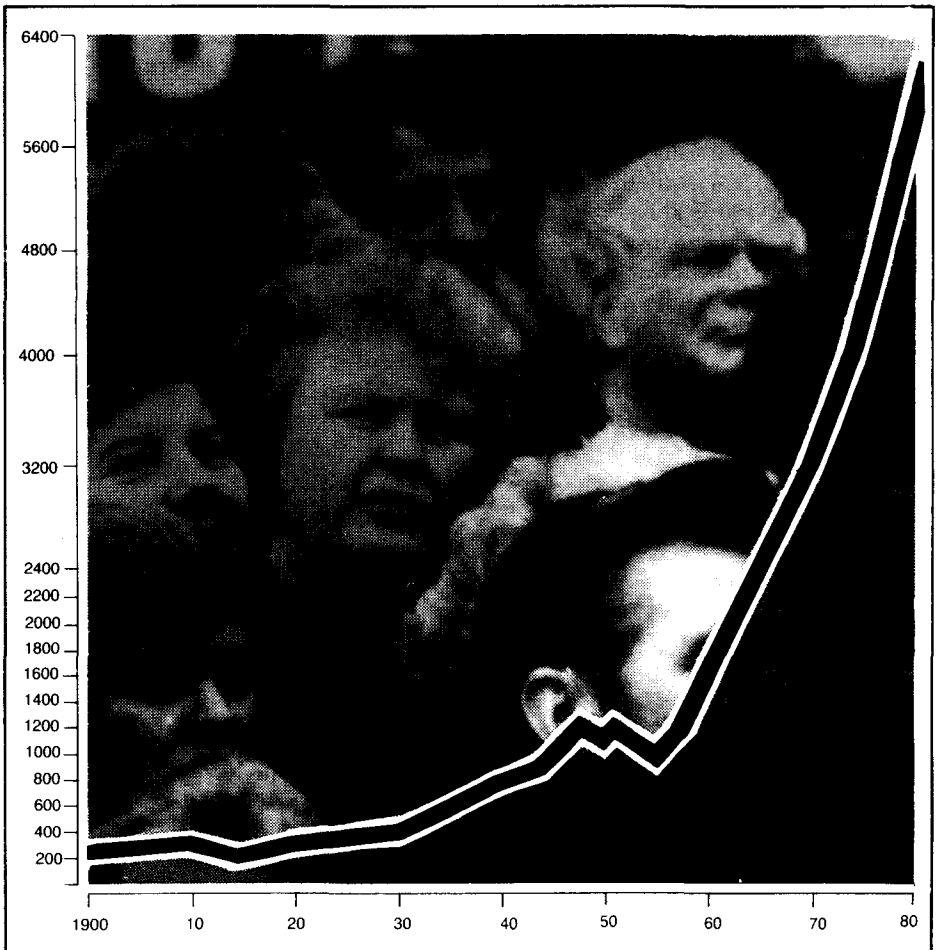

Figure 1 Numbers of notifiable crimes known to the police per 100,000 of the population, England and Wales, 1900-82.

The message is clear. For the poor, the disadvantaged and the vulnerable, crime is not merely a moral problem to be laid at the door of the nanny-state, teachers and social workers – the product of 'postwar funk' and the permissiveness of the 60s, as Norman Tebbit would have it. No more is it simply a media-inspired panic, as some on the Left would argue. In the inner cities and outer council estates, crime is the last straw, reproducing and compounding the endemic social injustice of life on the dole. Indeed, only unemployment is seen as a bigger problem – poor schools, bad housing, inadequate transport pale in significance.

Electorally, however, the Tories can live with the rise in crime – indeed it may even be of advantage to them, further fuel to the moral indignation of those in the home counties for whom crime is a worry but not a real risk. In fact it seems – covertly at least – that this is exactly the course that the government has now taken.

Faced with the outright failure of their policies – more police, wider police powers, tougher sentences etc, – it seems that Home Office ministers are now content to accept that crime will continue to rise and that there is little that government can do to stop or reverse the trend. There is some room for private enterprise and self-help (we are urged to buy DIY window locks and plastic tokens for our meters and to set up neighbourhood watch schemes) but, for the police, containment of the problem is the only viable option.

Order, surveillance and containment

We are witnessing a U-turn in Tory thinking, backed-up by a barrage of Home Office publications and research. Indeed, surprising as it may seem, it is now distinctly fashionable in Home Office circles to argue that there is little the police can, or even should, do about crime. Police patrols, they say, are very unlikely to catch criminals in the act and in most burglaries, for example, the loss is said to be too trivial to warrant the expense of clearing them up[3].

The convenient and politically expe-

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dient answer is to play down the problem of crime and play up the problem of order. In place of the old rhetoric, Home Office briefings now emphasise that the risks of 'the statistically average citizen' being a victim of crime are actually a lot less than is widely believed and that, in reality, an exaggerated or 'irrational fear of crime' is much more of a problem than crime itself. This may be hard to believe if you live in an area where every fourth house down your street is burgled every year, but it gets worse. For next we are told that, rather than concentrating on crime, the main job of the police should be to maintain order and tranquility on the streets. Especially in the inner cities – and this would seem even harder to believe – such policing will increase a sense of security and thus reduce 'irrational' fears.

The theory is derived from the work of one James Q Wilson, professor of government at Harvard University, and adviser on law and order to President Reagan. But it has two further and important twists. First, Wilson argues, somewhat paradoxically but with a nice hegelian ring, that it

people in the affluent suburbs may be comforted by the presence of a 'community policeman' taking tea and Hovis with the local residents

is not crime that causes fear of crime, but fear of crime which causes crime. The argument is summarised in the report on the second British Crime Survey:

> 'Fear of crime is triggered by non-criminal disorder on the streets – drunks, youths causing disturbances, noisy householders, graffiti, rubbish and litter . . . (T)hese incivilities serve as signs of crime and thus lead to fear regardless of actual levels of crime. (This) can provoke a downward spiral of fear of crime, neighbourhood decline and increased crime itself.' (M Hough and P Mayhew 1985 p39)

Secondly, therefore, Wilson argues that the police should have and should use wide discretionary powers such as stop and search – not as means of crime detection or law enforcement, however, but so that they can preserve order on the streets and enforce what he terms 'middle class values'. (This was exactly the thinking behind Douglas Hurd's promise at the last Tory conference to introduce an offence of 'disorderly conduct' in the Public Order Bill which is presently before parliament.)

Thus, without a shred of evidence and indeed despite surveys showing such issues to be very low on the list of the public's policing priorities, 'order maintenance' is now at the top of the agenda. In Merseyside, for example, only 8% of the population placed rowdy behaviour in their top five crime priorities – while in the inner city areas the figure is as low as 5%. (In marked contrast, 40% of supervisory officers in the Merseyside police put street rowdiness among their top five crime priorities.)

Current police practices

This emphasis on order is welcomed by the police – it conveniently justifies what is already routine in the inner city. For example, in Liverpool 8 some 37% of males under 30 reported that they had been stopped *and searched* by the police at least once during the past year. However, not only are such stops highly unproductive and wasteful of police time – in Merseyside only 43 arrests are made per thousand stops – they are highly selective and discriminatory.

The evidence of the Islington survey, for example, shows that black people are twice as likely to be stopped as whites, men are more than twice as likely to be stopped than women, while if you are under 25 you are 17 times more likely to be searched than if you are 45 or more. Thus, even in comparison with 32% of white males under 25, an extraordinary 53% of young blacks in Islington had been stopped by the police at least once in the last year.

Not only do such practices reveal the extent of racism within the police, they reflect what is already a *de facto* policy of surveillance and containment of 'suspect populations'. Known euphemistically as 'pre-emptive' or 'preventative' policing, police officers are encouraged to anticipate offences and to take action against those who they think *may* commit crimes in the future – rather than to investigate crimes which have *actually* been committed. The actions of 'potential criminals' are monitored and there is now considerable evidence that as many as one in 10 of the population and as many as one in three young working class males – the majority of whom have no criminal record – are under intermittent surveillance and have open files kept on them by the police.

The 'intelligence' collected – from virtually any source – is mostly unsubstantiated gossip and rumour about peoples' private lives, friends and associates and are totally unavailable to outside scrutiny. In 1981, for example, area constables in the Lothian and Borders police force were instructed to 'secure the services of at least one informant on every street' and to

considerably more police time is spent in the police canteen than in interviewing witnesses

collect intelligence from 'local officials, eg, housing department, social workers, gas and electricity board officials or anyone who has legitimate access to private houses and premises and is in a position to give information'. The practice is widespread – almost identical instructions are given to police constables in Merseyside, for example, where force orders tell officers to record any and all information on the grounds that 'we do not know today what we will need tomorrow'.

Again, such police activity has little to do with the reduction of crime and its control. An internal Home Office assessment of the computerised system of crime intelligence in the Thames Valley force showed a derisory increase of between 0.03% and 0.6% in the clear up rate. On the other hand, especially when computerised and immediately available by radio to the officer on the street, a person stopped by the police who has such a file is by definition 'suspicious' or 'of interest'.

The inevitable outcome of such systems – especially where stop and search and other powers relying upon 'reasonable suspicion' are widely used – is that policing becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy: those who are stopped get an intelligence record because they were stopped, while an intelligence record is proof that it was right to stop them in the first place and reason to stop them in the future. Order maintenance thus boils down to nothing else but institutionalised harassment and discrimination.

Law and order with a conscience

As further evidence that crime is really not as much of a problem as people think, the Home Office now stress that, in practice, the police spend most of their time dealing with burst pipes, helping motorists, giving round-the-clock advice and help – a social service of the last resort. Thus, according

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to the British Crime Survey, the public makes three times as many 'service' calls of this sort upon the police as they do in relation to crime – again, however, national averages disguise significant local variations. Nonetheless, this apparently high use of the police as a 'hidden social service' reinforces the shift away from what is now described by Sir Kenneth Newman, in his latest annual report on the Metropolitan Police, as a 'preoccupation' with crime.

Ideologically, of course, a police force with a social conscience is most acceptable – both to the more liberal-minded of the middle-classes and for the Right, for whom such proof that the police are primarily a caring 'service agency' shows just how unrepresentative the 'police-bashers' of the inner-city councils really are.

But, for most residents of Britain's inner cities and outer council estates, the argument is bogus. Certainly it is true, as the British Crime Survey found, that *nationally* 'the public used the police force as far more than simply fighters of crime'[4]. But in areas with high crime rates and hardline methods of policing like inner-city Liverpool and Islington, this gives a totally distorted impression of what local communities want from the police and an equally false impression of what the police actually do.

Thus in stark contrast to the BCS, both the local surveys in Merseyside and Islington showed that where crime is high people want and use the police primarily in response to crime. Throughout Merseyside, for example, some 57% of all contacts with the police made by the public were related to crime – that is, over twice the BCS national average. In contrast, only 7% of public initiated contacts were order-related, while the remainder were made up of traffic incidents (7%), lost and found property (10%), asking directions (10%) and other service calls (9%).

This is not to say that the 'service functions' are unimportant in areas where crime is high – merely that there are more important things for the police to be doing. The picture is once again of differences – of the differential impact of both crime and policing upon different sections of the community. People in the affluent suburbs may be comforted by the presence of a 'community policeman' taking tea and Hovis with the local residents. In the inner city the idea smacks of slick PR.

All the survey evidence is that, especially in areas where crime is a real problem for people, people want the police but they want them to get on with what they see to be the proper job of policing – the control and investigation of serious crime and offences like sexual assaults, robbery, and burglary. To this end, people want to see more patrol officers on the street, to be sure of an immediate response when they call the police, and to have the offences they have reported properly investigated when they occur. This is not what they are getting.

Losing the fight

The truth is that if you live in an area of high crime, your priorities will be largely ignored by the police, and when they are recognised, they will be dealt with in the wrong way. Take the investigation of crime – one of the top public priorities. As all research has shown, the vast majority of crimes cleared up – over 90% – depend directly on information supplied to the police voluntarily by members of the public. (Lest it be thought that very few people actually witness offences, the Merseyside Crime Survey found that in inner city Liverpool 21% of those interviewed had, in the previous 12 months, witnessed thefts from cars, 29% serious assaults, and 41% vandalism.) Yet, it is equally clear that the police spend very little time indeed on the most productive form of crime investigation – that is on interviewing the public about crimes that have actually been committed.

Thus, in a study of the Metropolitan Police, the Policy Studies Institute[5] found that only 7% of all police time was spent interviewing witnesses, suspects and informants. Nor, in this respect, is the Met particularly exceptional. In a survey of over 1000 police officers in Merseyside (carried out as part of the Merseyside Crime Survey), only 3% of police time was spent interviewing witnesses. Indeed, in Merseyside and the Met, it seems, considerably more police time is spent in the police canteen (9%) than on this crucial aspect of crime investigation.

in London in 1983 the number of crimes cleared up per police officer fell to four per year

If such findings suggest that the police do very little by way of crime investigation, the same is true of patrol work. Both the Policy Studies Institute and Merseyside police surveys showed that an extraordinary amount of police time was spent *inside* police premises – 45% in the Met and 54% in Merseyside. (Most of this was time spent on non-crime administration and station office duties.) In contrast, in the Met only 28% of police time was spent on patrol while, in Merseyside, patrol work accounted for only 16% of total police time. To put this very starkly, at any one time, out of a force of over 4,500 officers, on average there will be only 120 officers out on patrol throughout the whole of Merseyside – which has a population of 1.5m.

Again it would seem that police practices are considerably adrift from public priorities. In fact the police do very little by way of deterrent patrolling, even less by way of investigation of crime and their record is getting progressively worse. In 1979 41% of recorded crime was cleared up; by 1983 this had fallen to 37% and by 1984 to 35%. In London in 1983 – Sir Kenneth Newman's 'year of achievement' – the number of crimes cleared up per police officer fell to four per year, at the staggering cost of £5,578 per crime cleared up.

An alternative approach

If we are going to take the problem of crime seriously, we cannot merely reproduce the rhetoric and practice of Tory 'law and order', whether of the old or new variety. The policies of more police, wider powers, and tougher punishment have failed; in the inner cities and outer estates, policing is selective, discriminatory and ineffective; as policing methods have got tougher to deal with the 'crisis in crime', so people are less ready to cooperate with the police; less crime is cleared up, and so the problems are compounded. Yet harder methods are adopted, still greater alienation and discontent results.

Such have been the lessons of the Tories' war on crime. To escape this vicious circle, we require radical policies which, on the one hand, maximise public cooperation – without which the police cannot solve crime and, on the the other hand, minimise police coercion – which serves only to alienate the public. To achieve this, we need a political system of accountability in which the 'professional' and organisational demands of the police are subordinated to the needs of local communities. We need a legal framework of policing which guarantees the civil liberties of the public and limits the powers of the police.

Any effective, socialist response to crime and policing, however, must be able

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to demonstrate that the call for political accountability and respect for civil liberties is not merely an alternative rhetoric to the law and order lobby of the Right, but the cornerstone of an effective and coherent programme for effective policing and the reduction of crime. However there are real obstacles in the way.

Alienation and resistance

Firstly, there is now deep resistance to the police among key sections of the community, without whose cooperation there is little that can be done about crime. For good reason, this is especially true of the young and particularly young blacks – but not exclusively so. Again the differences between areas and groups are marked.

For example, in the affluent suburbs of Merseyside, where policing is low profile, only 2% of those interviewed – asked if they were to witness a street robbery – said that they would be unwilling to identify the offenders to the police. In inner city Liverpool, in contrast, this rose to 20% of the total adult population. In Islington, on the other hand, in answer to the same question, only 17% of young white males between 16 and 24 but 55% of black youths said they would be unwilling to do so.

Despite this, however, it would be totally wrong to typify inner city youth as 'anti-police'. For example, the Merseyside Crime Survey revealed an extraordinarily high demand for more patrol officers on the street – especially in the inner city areas with highest crime rates, where nine out of 10 people said there were too few foot patrol officers in their area. Significantly, that demand is even stronger amongst the young than it is among older members of the community. Likewise, the younger members of the community – black and white – place as great, if not greater, importance on the control of serious crime.

Alienation of the young is a particular problem if crime is to be reduced and for a very particular reason. As the surveys in Islington and Merseyside have both shown, not only are the young the most likely to be stopped and searched as suspects, they are also more likely to be the victims of crime and to witness more offences than any other section of the community. (Incidentally, the least at risk to crime are women over 50.) In other words, the young, who have most to reason to want crime controlled and who have the most information to give to the police, are also the most likely to experience the hard edge of urban policing and to be the most alienated from the police.

This means, secondly and on purely pragmatic grounds if nothing else, that effective policing demands that legilsation such as the Police and Evidence Act must be reformed and the coercive powers of the police strictly limited. In particular, the extended use of stop and search and the (proposed) prosecution of vague offences such as 'disorderly conduct' must be radically curtailed rather than extended. In inner city areas, where one house in four will be burgled every year, such practices are seen not only as a waste of public money and resources and as the wilful neglect of immediate priorities but, all too clearly, as clear evidence of racism, discrimination and selective policing.

Reorganisation and accountability

A third – and more intractable obstacle – is the internal organisation of the police themselves. For example, public demand for crime investigation and a visible police presence could be met by relatively simple organisational reform – namely, by devolving routine crime investigation to uniform patrol officers. (In many forces, all crime investigation is the responsibility of the CID alone; this results in considerable duplication of effort and unnecessary bureaucracy.)

the local community through rates and taxes pays the piper but cannot call the tune

Likewise there is clear evidence that officers deployed to other 'specialised' squads, such as the notorious special patrol groups (SPG), could be better and more effectively employed on the beat, again in routine crime investigation. In this way, more uniformed officers could be made available to investigate crimes which are presently written off by the CID as too 'trivial'. The emphasis, however, must be placed upon interviewing witnesses and the victims of crime – rather than on random stop, search and interrogation and the futile collection of so-called 'criminal intelligence', which are counter-productive and only guarantee continued racism and discrimination.

If nothing else, officers would be then visible and active in the community, though there is every reason to believe that with proper investigation, clear-ups would increase with greater deterrent effect on would-be offenders. CID officers could then concentrate on complex crimes such as embezzlement and fraud, which do require specialised skills and at present are notoriously under-investigated.

Behind all this, however, is the need for greater external control over the police. Indeed, if ever there was an argument for full local accountability of the police, it is to be found in the results of the Merseyside and Islington surveys. It cannot be overemphasised how important it is – if public cooperation is to become a reality – to ensure that police practices and priorities match the demands and needs of local communities.

Local crime surveys are a step in that direction, but they are very expensive and take a considerable time to complete – the Merseyside surveys cost in excess of £100,000. The only feasible and practical option is a system of democratic accountability under which the short and long-term objectives of policing policy are set by the community through local representatives. Under the present Police Acts, local authorities merely control the limits of the police budgets – they cannot decide policy or otherwise encroach upon what is at law the chief constable's responsibility for 'operational decisions'. In other words, the local community through rates and taxes pays the piper but cannot call the tune.

Different areas and sections of the community, as we have seen, have a plurality of problems and demands. In some areas, such as Liverpool 8, racist attacks and sexual harassment are a particular problem. In others, traffic policing will be the priority. Without a decentralised system of accountability, under which local policy is determined, policing practices are regularly reviewed, and organisational priorities set, the present 'autonomy', 'professionalism' and 'independence' of the police – for which, read isolation, arrogance and indifference – will remain unchecked. As will crime. □

[1] See M Hough and P Mayhew *The British Crime Survey: first report* 1983 and *Taking Account of Crime* HMSO 1985.

[2] R Kinsey *Merseyside Crime and Police Surveys* 1984/5 published by Merseyside County Council. T Jones, B Maclean and J Young *Islington Crime Survey* 1986.

[3] See for example Clarke and Hough *Crime and Police Effectiveness* HMSO 1984.

[4] Southgate and Eckblom *Contracts between Police and Public* HMSO 1984.

[5] D Smith *Police and People in London* Vol 4 PSI 1983.

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✻ Racism in the police force to be made a disciplinary offence.

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The AIDS Scare

A lot of irrational fear has been generated by the spread of AIDS. This is largely because of its association with homosexuality. But, little is really known about AIDS. . .

Paud Haggerty

MOST PEOPLE TODAY expect to live to a ripe old age and depend on modern medicine to cure illness. Occasionally illnesses come along such as legionnaires' disease which are a mystery. Such diseases quickly grab the headlines until a cure is found. But in the meantime a lot of irrational fear is generated.

During the Black Death of the 14th century many thousands of people died from a disease which was a total mystery to people. In such circumstances myths are generated and scapegoats sought. Then Jews were accused of poisoning wells and many European Jewish communities were attacked and wiped out. In the 20th century the only comparable medical mystery is cancer.

In the last few years a new medical scourge – AIDS – has appeared. Seemingly incurable, it strikes people in the prime of life. As an illness AIDS, however, is comparatively rare. The hysteria which has surrounded it can only be attributed to the fact that the majority of its early victims have been gay men.

What is AIDS?

AIDS stands for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. It is not a disease but a syndrome which means that it consists of a number of symptoms or illnesses, though it is not necessary to display all the symptoms to have AIDS.

One of the preconditions for getting AIDS appears to be infection with a virus called HTLV3. People with AIDS do not, however, normally die from the direct effects of HTLV3 but from either a rare cancer called *kaposis sarcoma* or a number of infections collectively known as 'opportunistic infections'.

Kaposis sarcoma (KS) is a rare cancer which manifests itself as purple blotches on the skin and sometimes on the internal organs. These blotches increase in size and number, sometimes quite rapidly. Before AIDS the only other known cases of KS were among either elderly Jewish or eastern Mediterranean men (where the progress of the cancer was slow) or in some parts of Africa.

Opportunistic infections is the term used to describe a number of illnesses caused by either fungi, parasites or viruses which do not normally affect healthy people. Many of the organisms causing opportunistic infections are common and found in a wide cross-section of the population. However, they are normally only present in small numbers and are kept in control by the body's immune system. With AIDS, the body loses its ability to keep the numbers of these organisms down to a manageable level because the immune system is damaged. These illnesses thus become extremely serious, weakening people to the point where eventually they die.

The main opportunistic infection known to us is *pneumocystis carinni pneumonia* (PCP) which is caused by a single-celled parasite (*pneumocystis carinni*). Genital herpes is another opportunistic infection. Many people get painful blisters on their sexual organs, but people with AIDS are often subject to extremely severe attacks. Shingles (caused by the chicken pox virus) can erupt, causing painful blisters on part or all of the body. Many people with AIDS get severe diarrhoea defying

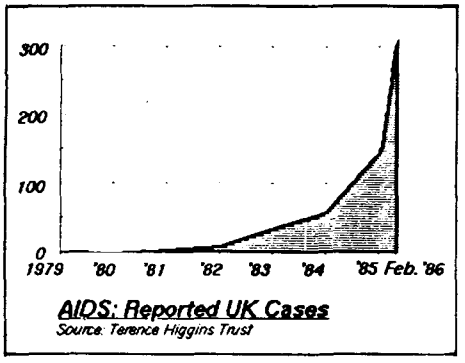
seemingly incurable, it strikes people in the prime of life

treatment, or oral thrush resulting in a thick coating of white fungus so severe it can be difficult to swallow food. There are several opportunistic infections and people with AIDS do not contract them all – those caused by organisms common to the communities in which they live are the ones that they are particularly susceptible to.

Many opportunistic infections are found as mild illnesses in healthy people. Those with AIDS, however, have much more severe attacks of these illnesses, they are more resistant to treatment and even when they appear to have been successfully treated the illness often recurs. The reasons these are called 'opportunistic infections' is that they take advantage of the fact that the body's immune system is weakened, that is its ability to fight off infection is weakened. What weakens the immune system in the case of people with AIDS is infection with the HTLV3 virus.

The virus HTLV3

This virus (Human T Cell Lymphotrophic Virus Type 3) frequently appears with a number of co-factors (such as stress and poor eating). Viruses are the smallest form of living organism and contain either a strand of DNA (deoxyribose nucleic acid), the chemical genes are coded on to, or a strand of RNA (ribonucleic acid), which is a chemical made from DNA in our cells and which in turn makes proteins. The DNA or RNA is then wrapped in a protein coat. A virus survives by invading living cells and hijacking its functions to reproduce itself.



AIDS: Reported UK Cases
Source: Terence Higgins Trust

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HTLV3 is a retrovirus. This means that it contains a strand of RNA which copies itself on to a strand of DNA (the reverse of the usual process). The DNA then incorporates itself into the genes of the cell where it remains as long as the cell lives. This is a problem in that to attack the virus we have to attack some of the body's own cells.

The DNA can be dormant for up to five years before starting to reproduce, which is what scientists mean when they say that it has an incubation period of up to five years. When it becomes active it starts to reproduce and, in the process, damages the cell's ability to carry out its job and, in some cases, destroys the cell.

The reason that HTLV3 can damage the body's immune system is that its favourite site for reproduction are the white blood cells. These form a T4 Lymphocyte. These cells normally circulate around the body bumping into germs and warning the body they are there. This is why infectious agents which normally exist in the body in small numbers can suddenly reproduce in large numbers without the body knowing, or being able to do anything about it.

The HTLV3 virus is very slow acting and it may be that some of its effects have not yet been seen. There is now some evidence that it may directly attack brain tissue causing defects and even pre-senile dementia.

Testing for AIDS

The specific nature of the AIDS virus makes it difficult and unreliable to test. It is also extremely expensive. It is far cheaper and easier to test for the anti-body to

the specific nature of the AIDS virus makes it difficult and unreliable to test

HTLV3 ie, the chemical the body produces to fight the virus. This poses a major problem in that the test will only indicate the presence of the antibody itself. Therefore, someone with a positive result may not actually have the virus ie, they may have come in contact with the virus and successfully fought it off with the anti-body. For this reason discovery that you are antibody positive to HTVL3 can cause a great deal of unnecessary emotional stress.

Most people who are antibody positive do not go on to develop any further symptoms and, even among those who do, most do not develop AIDS. In between the condition known as 'antibody positive' and contracting AIDS there is a range of illnesses that can be broken down into two main categories. The first is persistent lymphadenopathy or lymphadenopathy syndrome (LAS) and is characterised by an unexplained fever, sore throat, night sweats and chills, unexplained weight loss, tiredness and depression, diarrhoea and diminished libido or impotence. A small fraction of people with LAS go on to develop further symptoms – it can also remain in a stable condition over several years, or clear up. The second and more serious category is AIDS related complex (ARC). People with ARC also usually have LAS symptoms which persist. They may also get swollen lymph glands, reduced white blood counts (especially lymphocytes, of which T4 cells are one type), anaemia or oral thrush. Again many people stabilise in this condition or get better. Only a fraction go on to develop AIDS.

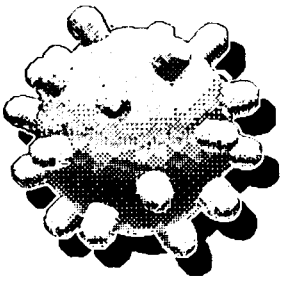
How is AIDS passed on?

There have been many scare stories about the way in which AIDS is contracted. Of course, by some remote chance, it might be possible to contract AIDS by being spat upon. But it seems fairly certain that the most likely way to contract AIDS is by direct blood to blood contact. This can happen through drug addicts sharing needles, coming into contact with contaminated blood (haemophiliacs who receive regular transfusions and blood products are particularly at risk), or mothers passing the virus on to foetuses in the womb. In such cases it is relatively easy to avoid the risks involved eg, by screening donated blood for the HTLV3 antibody.

However, the most common method of passing on the AIDS virus appears to be during sexual intercourse. Many authorities have traditionally dealt with the problems of sexually transmitted diseases (STD) by arguing that they can be avoided by either celibacy or monogamy (indeed before the first world war STDs were regarded as self-inflicted wounds by army authorities). Such attitudes do not take a realistic view of human sexuality. Sexual satisfaction is seen as such an important part of people's lives, and sexual relationships are so vital for personal well-being and fulfillment, that such calls for abstinence will not be heeded by the majority of the population.

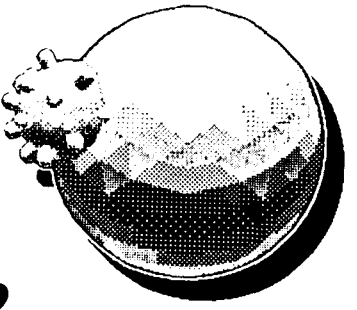
For most people sexual activity involves and culminates in penetrative intercourse. It is possible to reduce the risk of contract-

How the AIDS virus works



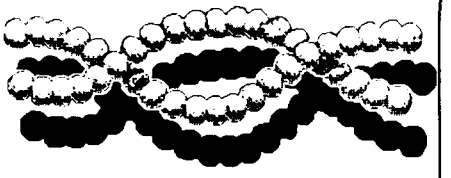
1

The AIDS virus enters the bloodstream



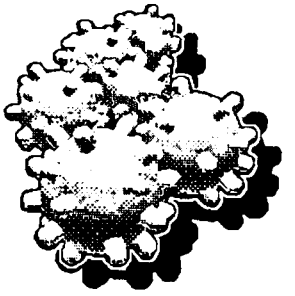
2

The virus attacks the Helper T cells, part of the body's immune defence system.



3

The genetic material of the AIDS virus is inserted into the nucleus of the T cell.



4

This genetic material may lie dormant for months or years until 'awoken' - possibly when the body's immune system is challenged by another infection. The genetic material then produces thousands of copies of the AIDS virus, destroying the T cells in the process.

diagram: Ian McKinnell

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ing sexually transmitted diseases by avoiding penetrative intercourse without foregoing sexual pleasure. It is no accident that sexually transmitted diseases are almost unknown among lesbians. No doubt other sexual acts bring about risk of contracting HTLV3 infection but none of these are as great as intercourse.

In the early stages of the so called 'AIDS epidemic' it was often thought that anal intercourse facilitated the spread of infection due to the tearing of delicate skin around the anus. This is of course nonsense. Everyone has to pass faeces through this passage and this would be very painful if the skin were really so delicate. Unfortunately, such presumptions have more to do with popular prejudice against homosexuality than with medical evidence. Any difference perceived in the risk of catching AIDS through anal intercourse as opposed to vaginal intercourse is merely a statistical one. Stated simply, because more gay men have AIDS at present, anal intercourse is the main way it is transmitted. But, if there were a situation where more heterosexuals had AIDS, vaginal intercourse would present the same problem. As AIDS spreads outwards through the population and is contracted by heterosexuals, the perceived risks will change.

It is a common assumption that straight men and women are safe from AIDS because they don't have sex with gay men. However this overlooks the fact that very large numbers of 'heterosexual' men do have sex with other men without admitting to homosexuality. Gay men are not a discrete population and AIDS is bound to spread outwards.

The AIDS panic

The fear of contracting AIDS is totally out of proportion to the risk involved in contracting AIDS. Even for sexually-active gay men, the risk is probably smaller than that of getting lung cancer, bronchitis or emphysema from smoking. Yet people who get lung cancer receive more sympathy than those who contract AIDS, even when there is no clear homosexual link. The fear of coming down with AIDS is not simply related to the fact that it is a killer illness. It is also because of its associaton with sexual, and in particular homosexual, transmission and anal intercourse.

Traditionally there have been two ways of looking at homosexuality; either as innate or acquired. By and large, the gay movements over the last century have organised campaigning for rights and law reforms around the former. It is immoral, it is argued, to punish people for what they cannot help. It is on the strength of such arguments that law reforms have been won. However, society has not abandoned the notion of acquired homosexuality, otherwise there would be no need for differential ages of consent (16 for heterosexuals, 21 for gay men) or all the concern about protecting the young from the influence of lesbians and gay men.

Today fear of contracting AIDS cannot be removed from fear of contracting homosexuality, a fear which is particularly potent amongst men. In her essay, 'Illness as Metaphor', Susan Sontag states that: 'any disease that is treated as a mystery and acutely enough feared will be felt to be morally if not literally contagious.' AIDS is certainly seen to be both physically and morally contagious. Infection with the former is seen as an indicator of the spiritual ailment of homosexuality. Against such a background it is hardly surprising that there has been such a rash of scare stories in the press which have gripped the popular imagination. And the exploitation of AIDS as a physical manifestation of the spiritual ills has left gay men isolated and frightened, prey to fanatics promising miracle cures. We hear stories about gay men with AIDS promising to go straight and get married if they are cured.

the American army has been insisting that all active service personnel take the test, and giving those with a positive result a discharge

The government's response

The fear of homosexuality and the scare produced in the press have undoubtedly coloured the attitude the government and health services have taken to AIDS. The government is caught in a double bind. There is the need to do something about what is a perceived public health crisis. Conversely, for a government of the Right to be too closely associated with an issue seen to be relevant only to gay men would be politically suicidal. Too close an association with homosexuality would cause problems amongst its natural constituency, though these problems would certainly also have to be addressed by a government of the Left.

In reality the government has done very little. Set against a background of cuts in the health service, there is little room for funding AIDS research. The government has now launched a publicity campaign around AIDS but the campaign is greatly hampered by the need to talk of sex. After all, discussing having sex in a manner which reduces the risk of AIDS whilst, at the same time, not being seen to support sexual promiscuity, does present a problem.

The fact that a test is available for the antibody to HTLV3 has not gone unnoticed by institutions. There are reports of gay men having trouble getting life insurance unless they have negative test results. The American army has been insisting that all active service personnel take the test, and giving those with a positive result a discharge. Medical confidentiality has become a major issue for gay men. Having it down in medical files that you are an HTLV3 positive effectively labels you as officially gay.

Treatment of AIDS

Many treatments have been tried for people with *kaposis sarcoma* or opportunistic infections. Sometimes these have helped, sometimes they have made things worse. However, even where treatments have been successful, diseases often recur almost immediately treatment has stopped. Various treatments have been tried to fight off the HTLV3 infection. These have included: immuno suppressants, immuno boosters and interferon (an anti-viral substance produced by organisms themselves to fight viral attack). Work is now progressing on a vaccine. However, producing vaccines to viral infections is not as easy as producing vaccines for bacteria, since viruses are very simple organisms with a very rapid reproduction rate and they often throw up mutations which change the shape of their 'coat'. Vaccines respond to the shape of the coat of the virus, so if the virus is producing strains with differences in coat shape this makes it difficult to produce a vaccine which is effective against all strains.

The greatest successes in the treatment of AIDS patients have probably been with alternative medicine. Use of homeopathic treatments and macrobiotic diets have appeared to work for some people. However, in the long run it is hard to say how effective any treatments will be as the AIDS virus is a very slow-acting one, making it difficult to predict long-term effects.

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The gay community

The gay community has responded in various ways to AIDS. These responses often depend on how confident people feel about being gay and how people regard their sexuality. Although the responses have been varied they have certainly been vigorous. Many organisations have been set up. In this country the main organisation is the Terence Higgins Trust (named after the first known person to have died from AIDS in Britain).

In the late 70s the gay movement in this country was certainly on the rise. The number of gay bars and discos expanded both in number and in size, forming the main meeting places for gay men. Most gay men find such spaces essential for their lives, but most report finding them difficult places to meet people in or to make friends. That is not to say that this does not happen, merely that the only social venues are organised for profit, not for the social welfare of customers. It would be unrealistic to expect bar owners to change and reduce profitability. Bars tend, therefore, to end up being pick-up places where people meet, then sleep together and part.

The spread of AIDS has led to roughly three types of responses from the gay community. Firstly, there is that typified by writer Larry Kramer whose autobiographical play *The Normal Heart* is now playing in London. His response is anger at what is not being done by the government. This much he shares with most gay activists. But he also thinks that the 'party' is over and that gay men must stop sleeping around: one of the characters in *The Normal Heart* asks why we did not campaign for the right to get married rather than to sleep around.

The second response is typified by most of the gay organisations set up around AIDS. It takes a more realistic attitude to people's sexuality. These organisations realise that people will not stop sleeping around nor is it necessarily desirable for them to do so. They concentrate on reducing the risks involved, advising people how to have 'safe sex' and campaigning and supporting those who are worried or who have contracted AIDS. The third response is largely an unorganised one, pretending that AIDS has nothing to do with you and you need to do nothing about it.

it is important that we stop pretending that nice people don't do it except in the marriage bed and start taking a more realistic attitude to sex

All three responses share one assumption – they treat people as individuals and fail to recognise their social environment. To go beyond these responses we must realise that people sleep around for many reasons. Many gay men have sex because they are lonely and because of the 'underground' nature of gay life which makes it difficult to form relationships. The desperation that such loneliness brings means that gay men are unlikely to respond to calls for either abstinence or care in their sexual behaviour. For people so desperate to pretend that they can make reasonable choices freely is really not on.

What is to be done?

Perhaps the most important thing that needs to be done about AIDS is to decouple it inside people's heads from homosexuality. That this will eventually come of its own accord after newspaper headlines saying, 'More Straights than Gays Have Gay Plague', is faintly ridiculous. It could, however, come rather sooner with concerted efforts. Health campaigns need to take a realistic view of people's sexuality. Promiscuity as a word is often used perjoratively and merely means 'someone who has more sex than me'. People do not die from having too much sex but from coming into contact with infected people. Proper health education campaigns, not just about AIDS but about all STDs, should be a priority for all governments. All of these diseases are preventable.

If we want gay men, and lesbians as well, to be able to lead healthy lives, then government and local authorities should learn from the example of the GLC in providing funds to create community spaces (as many do already for other communities). Certainly there could be something of a backlash. Nonetheless, the GLC, for example, brought gay politics on to the political agenda in London. And in doing so won much respect. Spending money on gays is no longer outrageous. The Left and the trade union movement will have to counter both their own fear of public reaction and their possible loss of sympathy, as well as an entrenched homophobia (a fear of homosexuality) within their own ranks. The Livingstone administration has shown how, in a small way, this can be done.

The spread of AIDS is not just an issue for gay men but a question of health for all of us, gay and straight. All aspects of health which have to do with sexuality need to be dealt with openly. The wages of sin are not death. Our sexuality like all aspects of our lives brings attendant health risks. Those risks are often serious and not only for gay men. It is important that we stop pretending that nice people don't do it except in the marriage bed and start taking a more realistic attitude to sex. Otherwise AIDS won't be the only plague which will strike (nor is it now the only epidemic) and the next time it might not be just gay men who are the first victims. □

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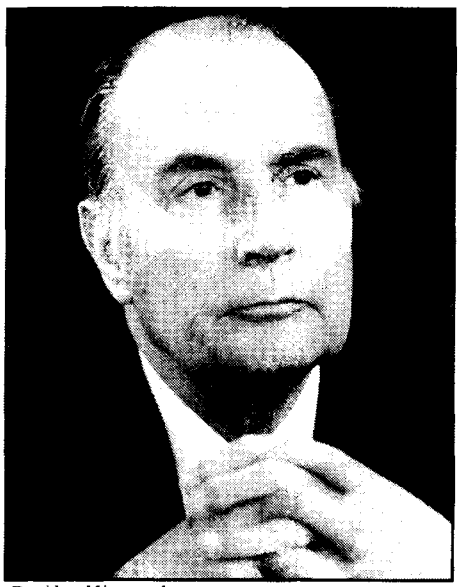
THE FRENCH PARADOX

France after the election

The recent French election was a big defeat for the Left. Where next?

Keith Dixon and Daniel Perraud



President Mitterrand . . .

THERE WAS SOMETHING unnerving about election night on French television on March 16. As the evening wore on and the not entirely unexpected outcome began to take a clearer shape, it was hard to distinguish victors and vanquished. The leaders of the traditional right RPR/UDF coalition, who were to scrape through with a narrow overall majority in parliament, with the help of some non-aligned right-wing deputies, all looked pretty glum about their victory.

At the the headquarters of the Socialist party, which had just been ousted after five years of power, the militants were toasting their defeat with champagne. The leadership of the PCF, which had once again confirmed its slippery decline, remained absent for most of the evening, and when Marchais or Fiterman finally did appear on the screen, it was to read a long diatribe against Socialist betrayal and to point out that the PCF was not the only party on the Left to have suffered losses since 1981.

There were however wild manifestations of enthusiasm in the hall where the Front National had gathered the faithful to celebrate the entry of over 30 ultra-Right deputies into the French national assembly. Le Pen's party had in particular run rampage in the towns along the Mediterranean coast, with a massive 24.37% of the vote in Marseilles. Back in the television studio the discussions reflected ominously the new reality on the French political scene: whereas on the evening of the Front National's breakthrough in the European elections in 1984 the Socialist and Communist representatives had refused to participate in a debate with the neo-fascist leader Le Pen, this time both he and Stirbois, the general secretary of the movement, were accepted into the democratic fold.

An ambiguous victory

A closer look at the results of the legislative and regional elections should help to explain the paradoxical behaviour of the traditional Right and the Socialists. With nearly 55% of the vote, the Right, as a whole, has succeeded in breaking the mould of French voting behaviour, which, with a couple of notable exceptions, had maintained a balance between Left and Right for a quarter of a century. This time the parties of the Right have substantially widened their social base of support. However, the price that has been paid to achieve this historic victory over the Left is a high one: almost one right-wing voter in five opted for the racist, authoritarian rhetoric of Le Pen. This has evidently put the RPR/UDF coalition in an awkward spot since they had explicitly turned down any election deal with the Front National for fear of losing centrist support.

almost one right-wing voter in five opted for the racist, authoritarian rhetoric of Le Pen

The scope for action of a right-wing government has been narrowed. Flanked by a vociferous ultra-Right, hemmed in by the constitutional powers of a Socialist president, and faced with a Socialist party which, in obtaining 30.8% of the vote, has achieved its immediate objective of remaining by far the strongest party in France (hence the champagne – which many a disappointed left voter must have considered to be an untimely manifestation of party egoism), the prospects of a full and unproblematic implementation of the 'common programme' of the Right have become dimmer.

The realignment of the Right has also been marked by the comeback of the 'neo-gaullist' RPR, which has by far the largest parliamentary group of the right-wing parties in the new assembly. Chirac's party has been moving steadily rightwards since its ephemeral flirtation with 'French style' labourism in the mid 70s (at that time the RPR leadership was arguing that 'popular gaullism' had a lot to learn from the British Labour party) and has now taken a neo-liberal stand on economic issues. The thinking of the RPR has been revamped by the young ideologues of the new Right whose influence over the gaullist leadership has grown over recent years. This radicalisation of the RPR, particularly since 1981 – its break with traditional gaullist interventionism and its adoption of hardline attitudes on law and order and immigration – has blurred the demarcation lines between the RPR and the ultra right. Thus militants, officials and even former deputies of the RPR have been defecting to the Front National, and recent opinion polls have shown that the RPR electorate is in favour of a rapprochement between the two parties. This in itself may well be a source of confusion, if not division, within the ranks of the Right.

Internal divisions between the RPR and the UDF, and within the UDF, were

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and from right to extreme right Raymond Barre . . .

Jacques Chirac . . .

and Le Pen.

photos: Camera Press

already evident before the elections as the debate on the eventuality of power-sharing with Mitterrand split the right-wing camp into 'cohabitationists' and 'anti-cohabitationists': this led to the divisive go-it-alone stand taken by former PM Raymond Barre, who is radically opposed to any form of coexistence with the Socialist president. Although Barre and his UDF supporters suffered an unexpected setback with a poor electoral score in the Rhone-Alpine region, considered their stronghold, the former economics professor is nonetheless likely to cause considerable trouble in the future as he jostles for front-runner position in the presidential elections which are scheduled for 1988 at the latest. These inter- and intra-party divisions are also bound to be exacerbated by the RPR's now domineering predominance over the UDF.

The neo-fascists

The uncontested victor on the Right is the Front National which has consolidated its position as a third force in right-wing politics with 9.78% of the vote. Although the score is down on its European election results in 1984 (10.95%) and a long shot from the wild projections of Le Pen, who claimed his party would have between 50 and 100 deputies in the national assembly, it is nonetheless higher than all of the opinion poll forecasts (which credited the neo-fascists with 'only' 6-8% of electoral support) and proof that the 1984 result was no flash in the pan, as many political commentators claimed at the time.

The relations between the Front National and the traditional Right during the coming months will undoubtedly be of key importance for Chirac's right-wing experiment. Since the municipal elections in 1983, when the whole of the Right participated in a wave of anti-immigrant rhetoric and the Front National made its first electoral breakthrough, even managing to strike a deal with the local RPR group in order to win the council elections in Dreux, these relations have always been ambiguous.

Some of the present leaders of the traditional Right have a lot in common with the ultras (the UDF deputies Madelin and Longuet, now ministers in Chirac's government, both started their political careers in the ultra-Right paramilitary group Occident). There has also been growing collaboration between all the right-wing parties on a local level: immediately after the regional elections the leaders of the traditional Right and the Front National got together to share out the responsibilities of running the regional councils in those areas where the neo-fascist score made co-operation politically 'possible'.

the Left itself has been reduced to a state of ruins: its common programme has been abandoned . . .

However, the internal contradictions should not be under-rated. After all, as Chirac pointed out before the elections in an opportunist attempt to ostracise the neo-fascists, recent French history has been marked by the often bloody opposition between the gaullists and the extreme Right (the collaboration period and the Algerian crisis). Within the UDF there has been minority but vociferous opposition to any form of collaboration with the ultra-Right from influential personalities like Simone Veil and Bernard Stasi.

Overall, the combined results of the right-wing parties, although not up to the expectations of the RPR/UDF coalition, nonetheless mark a significant shift rightwards, and confirm the trend towards more radical forms of right-wing politics already nascent in the 1981-1983 period of social agitation against the Socialist-Communist government. This emergence of a radicalised Right, flanked by a strong racist movement, cannot be explained away simply as a manifestation of the social and economic crisis in France. Neither can it be simply put down to frustration with the evident failure of both pre-1981 Giscardian liberalism and post-1981 technocratic social democracy in providing adequate solutions. (Although, evidently, poor living conditions combined with disappointed expectations do provide a congenial breeding ground for such trends, as the electoral results of the Front National in the dilapidated housing estates around Marseilles and other major industrial towns show.)

Rather, the shift to the Right is also the direct result of the ideological earthquake which has been shaking French politics since the mid 70s, lifting the 'taboos' of the post-resistance period, and which has enabled violent anti-communism and nationalistic attacks on 'alien elements' within the population (two key ingredients of the Pètainist national revolution) to

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become once again respectable products on the political marketplace.

The rout of the Left

> 'Mitterrand must be credited with having transformed the Socialist party from an ideology-bound, partly marxist faction into a broad social-democratic force in the European mainstream'. *Time* March 1986.

Despite the comeback of the Right and the ugly upsurge of racist politics, the Socialist leadership, although defeated, had some reason to feel triumphant about the election results. The party had been alone in power since the departure of four Communist ministers in the early summer of 1984. It had already suffered severe losses in the municipal elections of 1983, and was to go on to see a slump in the Socialist vote in the European elections in 1984 (down to 20.75%). Mitterrand had become the least liked president of the fifth republic.

The late Mauroy and Fabius governments had pushed through unpopular policies, which not only broke with their pre-1981 pledges, but also with most French people's ideas about what Socialists should do when in office. The rightward drift that had radicalised the parties of conservative opposition had also destabilised the traditional values of the Left and transformed beyond recognition the political and economic analysis of the Socialist party leadership. The highest priority was given to reducing the inflation rate and public spending, if necessary at the cost of increasing unemployment and hardship among working people. Thus the Socialist administration actually restricted entitlement to unemployment pay, particularly for the long-term unemployed.

The nationalised industries – initially intended to be a showcase of workers' control – were to be run according to market criteria, if necessary at the expense of the unions. (The new managing director of the Renault company, nominated by the government, made no bones about his intention of breaking the hold of the CGT on what was once considered to be the 'workers' fortress'). The modernisation and restructuring of French industry was to go ahead with or without trade union co-operation.

From radicalism to conservatism

In marketing the capitalist virtues of economic efficiency and competitiveness against the socialist values of solidarity and equality, in identifying class struggle with disruption and corporate egotism, the 'new' Socialist ethic has undoubtedly struck a chord of sympathy among management staff in industrial firms and young dynamic entrepreneurs in high-tech, and thus widened the appeal of the Socialist party. It has also called into question the very idea of a socialist transformation of French society – the idea that had dynamised French politics for more than a decade after 1968.

The U-turn of the Socialist government, engaged in mid-1982 but denied at the time, and undoubtedly accelerated during the Fabius administration, and the accompanying apologetics of the Socialist party leadership, have successfully marginalised critical left thinking in France, and undermined the efforts of those, even within the Socialist party, arguing in favour of a democratic *socialist* alternative.

A new consensus on the Left is in the process of being constructed around the (not very novel) idea that governments – whatever their political colour – do not really have much latitude in their strategic

a new consensus on the Left is in the process of being constructed

choices, if they wish to avoid the pitfalls of left and right totalitarianism. This is what Jean Daniel, the influential editor of the *Nouvel Observateur*, recently called the 'law of 5%', ie, there can only be 5% real difference between right- and left-wing policies when confronted with the 'realities' of political power in a modern industrialised democratic society. This flatly conservative approach to policy-making of course contrasts violently with the 'lefter than thou' rhetoric of Socialist leaders in the 70s, when they were intent on consolidating their social base in competition with the Communists.

Nevertheless, despite the backtracking and broken promises, the Socialists, with 30.8% of the vote in the legislative elections, have succeeded in remaining *the* dominant force on the French Left, thus fulfilling Mitterrand's ambitious objective of the late 60s. In the process, however, the Left itself has been reduced to a state of ruins: its once common programme has been abandoned; its historic values have not only been called to question (always a healthy process) but jettisoned for new gods of a distinctly capitalist persuasion; its final objective has been undermined from within.

The PCF's irreversible decline?

This crisis on the French Left could have provided the Communists with the much needed opportunity for a comeback, all the more so since discontent had steadily grown, since the U-turn in 1982, amongst those who voted for Mitterrand in 1981 in the expectation of change. These hopes, moreover, were clearly fed by the radical promises of the common programme of the pre-1981 period, for which the Communists had taken much of the credit. Such however was not to be the case: the PCF had steadily lost much of its credibility as it zig-zagged from one political position to another, and this credibility gap undermined its influence among those who had hoped for a socialist transformation.

Despite criticism within the party, the Communist leadership fought the election campaign on policies, and used a style of political discourse, which had already reduced them to playing walk-on – or more relevantly, walk-off – parts in contemporary French politics. Thus, for example, their hasty last-minute proposals during the election campaign for creating 1m jobs in a year, put over with the usual self-assured aggressiveness by PCF leaders, were met with incredulity even by the most staunch party supporters.

Although the PCF, in the national assembly elections, obtained a marginal increase on the 1984 European elections in terms of votes cast, it nonetheless confirmed its historic decline, with 9.8% of the vote, the worst Communist score for half a century. The red belt around Paris has changed colour, and the PCF now trails behind the Socialist party in many more of its former strongholds. What must be even more worrying, from the Communist point of view, is that pre-election polls among young people in general, and among students in particular, indicated the virtual disappearance of Communist influence in this age group.

What is clearly at stake here is the continuing existence of the 'French miracle', ie, a strong and influential Communist party in an advanced industrial society. The marginalisation or collapse of the PCF is also bound to have a snowball effect within the trade union movement, where the CGT is already suffering from a spectacular drop in membership and influence.

Since the March elections, dissatisfac-

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tion in Communist party ranks has surfaced in a variety of forms, with public calls for an extraordinary congress, together with press conferences by town and regional councillors and Communist mayors urging the leadership to accept a wide-ranging debate on PCF strategy. For the leadership this debate can only take place within the party, and along the lines already set out by the 25th congress. The outcome of all this is uncertain, but apparently the so-called 'renovators' have decided that this time they will go down fighting.

Chirac versus Mitterrand

With the realignment of forces on the Right and on the Left now well underway, it is no easy task to imagine the shape of political things to come from now until the presidential elections, the next key date in French electoral life. Much will obviously depend on the outcome of the present trial of strength between President Mitterrand and the RPR-dominated government led by Chirac. Under the fifth republic, the president has considerable constitutional powers, although the recent debates on 'cohabitation' have revealed that even within this highly presidentialist regime there still remains a great amount of vagueness in the definition of the respective powers of the president and the government.

Mitterrand has, however, already started to mark out his territory: he showed that he is willing to use his constitutional right of veto over cabinet appointments when he turned down Chirac's proposal to give the key post of Minister of Foreign Affairs to the UDF baron, Lecanuet, well-known for his pro-atlanticist positions. This, in itself, was an ambiguous exercise in cohabitation, since Mitterrand's refusal fitted quite well with Chirac's own personal hatchet job on the UDF leadership, who have been kept out of strategic posts within the new government. Nonetheless, Mitterrand has also made it clear that he reserves the right of veto over the *ordonnances* proposed by Chirac (which would enable the new government to proceed rapidly in certain fields by by-passing parliament) and that he intends to accept only the measures which constitute an 'improvement' on existing social legislation.

The question, however, is not a purely constitutional one, and Mitterrand's power (and desire) to intervene and hold up rightist legislation depends largely on the wider balance of political forces. The Chirac government is handicapped by its narrow majority in the national assembly and possible defection of non-aligned centrist deptuies: it will therefore have to seek a *modus vivendi* with the Front National if it wishes to push through some of the more radical measures included in its electoral programme. This *modus vivendi* is, however, likely to be problematic, in that one of Chirac's main priorities, in conformity with the RPR/UDF common platform, is a return to two-round majority voting. This is of course anathema to the ultra Right who owe their newly gained parliamentary strength to the introduction of a proportional representation system by the Socialists.

The Right will doubtless be hoping to whip up extra-parliamentary support for their programme, which despite some last minute pre-electoral watering down still has a radical ring to it, although its main planks are hardly unfamiliar to a British audience. Privatisation and deregulation are the keywords, accompanied by anti-immigrant legislation, more power to the police and a clamp-down on 'irresponsible minorities' in what is left of France's colonial possessions. And the composition of the government suggests that the doctrinaire hardliners will have a certain amount of leverage to push for full implementation of this policy package. Alongside the former ultras Madelin and Longuet, Juppé will be arguing in favour of undiluted neo-liberalism as Budget Minister; and with Charles Pasqua in charge of the Ministry of the Interior and the ultra-right Pandraud head of security, law and order will be back with a vengeance. The proposed reintroduction of identity controls by the police and restrictive legislation on naturalisation procedures for immigrants are concrete manifestations of the influence of the ideas of the ultra-right on the new parliamentary majority.

the Right will doubtless be hoping to whip up extra-parliamentary support for their programme

Prospects for the Left

Much of the common platform is concerned with undoing the progressive legislation undertaken by the Socialist-Communist administration during its first 18 months in office: the banks, insurance companies and major industrial groups brought under public control by the Nationalisation Act are to be denationalised; the extensive rights given to tenants under the Housing Minister Quilliot are to be curtailed, as are the powers of workers and trade unionists in industry, codified in the so-called *Lois Auroux*, and the legislation on the democratisation of the public sector.

Unfortunately for the Right, it is easier to whip up support in opposition than when in power (as the French left discovered in the 1981-86 period). The inevitable compromises of government (and not only with Mitterrand) may well generate disappointment in those strata who have been radicalised by years of anti-socialist agitation, thus providing new opportunities for the ultra Right. Most political commentators also seem to believe that Mitterrand will be making the most of these difficulties and new sources of division on the Right in his war of attrition with the government.

Despite the general ideological shift to the right, and the undoubted historic defeat which the French Left has just suffered, it may be that the future has still some surprises in store. A recent opinion poll in *Le Monde* shows that some of the Left's reforms and the values that underpin them still command support in the population well beyond the Left's present constituency. Thus, there is already *majority* disapproval of certain overtly reactionary policies contained in the Right's common programme: the abolition of the wealth tax, for example, or the promised removal of administrative constraints on redundancy procedures.

Can the French Left reconstruct a political project on these rather meagre remnants of its former ideological and moral hegemony? Certainly not in the near future, and not without profound changes in both the parties of the Left. The PCF is being reluctantly forced, from within its ranks, to take a closer self-critical look – perhaps a last-ditch effort before disappearing from the mainstream of French politics. If this self-criticism turned out to be both constructive and contagious (ie, if it could spread across the Left and unsettle the complacency of the present Socialist leadership), then it may be that the French Left could rise from its largely self-incinerated ashes. □

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EUROPE'S LEFT: A NEW CONTINENTAL BLEND

Donald Sassoon

The French election was a profound blow to the European Left. But it would be wrong to think the European Left is taking a hammering. What is more, some parts of it have been doing some important rethinking.

THE DEFEAT of the Left in France is depressing, but the overall situation of the European Left is not uniformly gloomy though, on the whole, the debits outbalance the credit-entries.

The pessimists will point to the continuation of conservative rule in Britain and West Germany, to the election of a right-wing government in France, to the continuing split between Socialists and Communists in Italy, to the weakening of the peace movement after the successful installation of Cruise missiles in Western Europe and to the boost the European Right has received from the overwhelming victory achieved by Ronald Reagan in 1984. They will also point to the revival of traditional ideologies as a reaction against the alleged permissiveness of the 60s, the growth of right-wing populist racism (France), and the weakening of trade union influence throughout the continent.

The optimists will point out that in the 80s, for the *first* time since the war, left-wing governments were elected in Spain, Greece and France. They will stress that the political success of the new Right has not been as devastating as it is sometimes made out to be. Its only real victory has been in Britain with the advent of Thatcherism, and even here it has failed to provide a long-term solution and is becoming unpopular. In West Germany it has been forced to moderate its policies. In France and Portugal it co-exists with a Socialist president while it has been defeated in Sweden. The optimists will also find comfort in the increasing divisions between Western Europe and the USA and in the fact that the new Soviet leadership seems to be seriously committed not just to better public relations but also to a rapid improvement in East-West relations. Moreover, new progressive social subjects have become firmly entrenched: the women's movement has had an impact in virtually every West European country; a strong peace movement has succeeded, at least for a time, in holding the centre of the political stage in Britain, West Germany, Holland, Italy and Spain and ecology has become a major issue in most countries, especially in Germany.

Clearly political developments have not been uniform, even though West European countries have reached a remarkable degree of convergence in their economic and social structure. Their economies are deeply intertwined. They tend to be each others' main trading partners. All are affected by the collapse of the (same) traditional manufacturing sectors such as shipbuilding, steel and heavy engineering. Nearly all face the most formidable level of unemployment since the 30s. The different governments have tended to adopt a policy of containment of public spending, jettisoning some aspects of the welfare state, cornerstone of the class compromise between labour and capital which had underpinned the economic growth of the 50s. Finally, all European states face international economic trends which escape any form of national control.

The same problems and issues crop up everywhere: 'What is happening here is that the workers are disappearing. That's all. Nothing like this has ever happened to us, but we cannot return to the past', so declared the new (Communist) leader of the CGIL, the main Italian union, but it could have been said by any trade unionist living in the real world. The Left everywhere is very much in the same soup even though it is, on the whole, disunited and uncoordinated.

most component parts of the European Left have had to admit that there is a crisis of socialism

The Left and the nation state

This was not always the case: for nearly two decades after the war the social-democratic and the communist currents of the European Left were each relatively united and coordinated by their respective commitment to Atlanticism and Soviet foreign policy. Now this old distinction is much less relevant. Besides, in spite of their antagonism and rivalry, the two trends did share a common premise: the assumption that the nation-state was the fundamental terrain of socialist transformation and that all political problems could be resolved once a left government had subjected the state machine to its control (or had constructed a new state machine).

The expression 'national roads to socialism' has been commonly used to describe the strategies of the communist parties since the war, but it could be equally well used to characterise those of the socialists. Keynes, as much as Lenin, took the nation-state as the main terrain of political action and the state as the chief instrument of change. This concentration on the state led in most cases to statist politics, the tendency to see solutions as emanating from the top, the chronic distrust of movements from below, the refusal to recognise forms of organisation other than those traditional to the labour movement, ie, unions and parties.

To some extent this was inevitable. Political parties fight in a national environment, take part in national elections, present national programmes. The assumption of all this must be that the state and its institutions are in effective control of what goes on within the national borders and that something can be done at the national level. This kind of politics led to an overestimation of the potentiality of the state level at the expense of the local and the supranational levels.

There is thus a thread linking the concept of the nation-state and statism. One of the great achievements of the new Right has been to keep these two concepts separate. The 'nation-state', subsumed in the ideology of nationalism, is allowed to

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The Left in Western Europe

The information in the boxes gives the share of the vote scored by the major left parties in each country. The map indicates the political complexion of the goverment in some of the major West European countries.

- *right-wing government*
- *left-wing government*
- *France – right-wing government and left-wing president*
  Italy – predominately right-wing government but left-wing prime minister

Olof Palme, until his tragic assassination Swedish prime minister and leader of the Social Democrats. Palme was one of the great figures of the postwar European Left.

SWEDEN
Social Democrats (SAP) 44.9%
Communist party (VPK) 5.4%
Total left share 50.3%
(general election September 1985)

Alessandro Natta, Enrico Berlinguer successor as general secretary of the Italian Communist party, which remains arguably the most impressive left-wing party in Europe.

BRITAIN
Labour party 27.6%
Total left share 27.6%
(general election June 1983)

Peter Glotz, secretary-general of the West German SPD and one of the key figures in its rethinking. An interesting feature of recent years has been the growing convergence between the SPD and the PCI.

FRANCE
Socialist party (PS) 31.04%
Communist party (PCF) 9.78%
Total left share 40.82%
(general election March 1986)

WEST GERMANY
Social Democrats (SPD) 38.2%
Greens 5.6%
Total left share 43.8%
(general election March 1983)

Andreas Papandreou, the Greek prime minister and the architect of the revival of the Greek Left after the overthrow of the colonels.

PORTUGAL
Socialist party (PS) 20.77%
Communist party (PCP) 15.49%
Total left share 36.26%
(general election October 1985)

Felipe Gonzales, the charismatic leader of the Spanish Socialist party and prime minister since 1982.

ITALY
Socialist party (PSI) .. 11.4%
Communist party (PCI) 29.9%
Total left share 41.3%
(general election June 1983)

SPAIN
Socialist party (PSOE) 48.4%
Communist party (PCE) 5.4%
Total left share 53.8%
(general election October 1982)

GREECE
Pasok 45.8%
Communist party (KKE) 9.9%
Communist party (interior) (KKE-es) 1.8%
Total left share 57.7%
(general election June 1985)

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maintain positive connotations while statism (which is taken to mean most forms of state intervention) is mercilessly criticised. At the same time the policies which flow from this critique make the nation-state less relevant and the conception of 'national roads' even less realistic. Why? Because the Right calls for deregulation everywhere, for the free movement of capital, for the abolition of all restrictions to trade, for unimpeded currency flows etc, in other words, for the removal of obstacles to the growth of international capital. The result of all this is to leave the nation and its state,

the phase of 'eurocommunism' is now clearly over

the focus of all the efforts and political energy of the Left, totally at the mercy of powerful external constraints.

The three trends

The new Right's critique of statism as well as its attachment to the nation-state has been felt everywhere in the labour movement and has contributed, together with the structural crisis, to the crisis of left politics. This has engendered a welcome wave of self-criticism (not in all parties: fundamentalists can be unrepentant sinners). Most component parts of the European Left have had to admit that there is a crisis of socialism and engage in a serious rethinking of their strategies, programmes and perspectives. Many left parties have been particularly struck by the difficulties faced by the French Socialists' attempt to reflate on their own, and by the way they were forced to adopt an austerity programme.

Of course, modern political parties are complex organisms which can be categorised in different ways and are not so monolithic as to be easily pigeon-holed into 'ideal types'. Nevertheless there are, broadly speaking, three discernible trends, all co-existing to a greater or lesser extent within each party: *Europeanism*, *centrism* and *traditionalism*. These are the main features of each of these trends:

1 *The Europeanist option*. This, like the centrist, is 'revisionist' because it accepts that what is in crisis is not only a particular form of capitalist organisation of society but also all hitherto existing forms of socialist politics. The centrists, such as the British SDP, conclude that the socialist project is no longer valid and that it is necessary to come to terms with the new forms of capitalist development. Europeanists, on the other hand, share with the traditionalists a lasting commitment to the goal of socialism, but, unlike them, recognise that drastic revisions are necessary. Both Europeanists and centrists are generally pro-EEC, but the former emphasise that the long-term goal of European integration must be the independence of the whole of Europe (East *and* West) from both superpowers while the latter have a clearly Atlanticist conception of Europe.

Europeanists have taken on board aspects of the critique of statism and have been receptive to the new social movements, particularly to green politics. They are also more aware of the limitations of the nation-state and consequently more willing to examine both decentralised and supranational politics. They respond to the structural changes brought about by the rise of the 'microchip' society and to the Japanese and American challenge by calling for greater European autonomy in economic and defence matters as well as for the democratisation of the institution of the EEC.

The centrist line

2 *The centrist option*. Centrism, which is particularly strong in the Italian and Spanish socialist parties, starts from the premise that the crisis of socialism in Europe is irreversible and ends up by accepting most of the neo-liberal critique of the welfare state and, in particular, the concept of 'overloaded government', that is, the assertion that because the government cannot cope with the surfeit of demands emanating from civil society it must seek to reduce them.

The centrists assume that the information revolution is reorganising European society around the American model: class is no longer a significant social cleavage, political trade unionism is damaging, class politics are irrelevant and the market must be the central mechanism in the allocation of resources. Centrism entails an outspoken commitment to Atlanticism. It recognises the reality of the American economic challenge but exclusively in terms of technological competition (as Heseltine did during the Westland affair). It lays more emphasis on European society adapting itself to the requirements of the technological revolution than on the use of technology as an instrument for change and social progress.

3 *The traditionalist option*. The traditionalists too accept that the European Left is in crisis but blame social democracy and the old Keynesian assumption that it is possible to resolve the fundamental contradictions of capitalist society. Class remains the fundamental issue. The information society is just another stage of capitalist development. New issues, such as feminism and ecology, they say, express at best real social demands but they must be integrated into working class politics. 'National roads to socialism' remain the foundation of any political advance. The EEC is, in the final analysis, nothing more than a rich man's club.

The West German SPD

The two major representatives of Europeanism are the West German SPD and the Italian Communist party (PCI). Since its electoral defeat three years ago the SPD has been re-examining its past strategy. This is perhaps yet another example of how a period of opposition can, at times, concentrate the mind wonderfully: in government the SPD had assumed that West German socialism had succeeded where others had failed and that they had produced the best model of social democratic management of the economy – *Modell Deutschland* – to be adopted by the rest of Europe. There was an understandable pride at the successes obtained: low unemployment, a good social security system, an efficient economy and low inflation. This optimism did not last. The Schmidt government had to embark on a deflationary economic policy of austerity. In September 1982 it lost the support of its coalition partners (the Free Democrats) and had to give way to a right-wing government. In the elections of March 1983 the SPD, deserted by many of its traditional working class supporters, suffered major losses.

Jolted by the successes of the Greens and by the strengths of the pacifist movement, the post-Schmidt leadership decided to develop a new programme to be ready before the end of 1986. The preparatory

in theory all three options are available to the British Labour party

documents demarcate themselves from the past in at least three respects:

1 The traditional concept of 'unlimited growth' which was the keystone of the historic compromise between labour

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and capital is jettisoned in favour of a new conception of economic growth within ecologically defined guidelines.

2 The need to establish a new relation between North and South.

3 The conception of a European-wide strategy as the only dimension which

the question of greater autonomy in the field of defence. . . is where the differences between the parties are at their most acute

would enable the socialist movement to meet the challenge of the new technological revolution.

There is undoubtedly a tactical element in the emphasis on ecology: the SPD is running very scared of the Greens. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the SPD is seriously rethinking the very concept of 'progress towards socialism' as being the equivalent of quantitative growth and has put the ecological question at the centre of its politics. This is closely tied to the rethinking on the issue of nuclear war. The SPD is quite distant from unilateralism or pacifism, but it has changed significantly since Schmidt called on the Americans to site Cruise and Pershing missiles on European soil. Peter Glotz, the party's new secretary-general, has come out against NATO's strategy of 'first strike' option and in favour of the creation of nuclear-free zones.

The overcoming of the national road model epitomised by the *Modell Deutschland* slogan has been replaced by a new kind of Europeanism. In a *New Statesman* article (December 20-27 1985) Peter Glotz writes: 'Social Democracy and democratic socialism can *only* be achieved today as European concepts; in national terms these ideals become more illusory and hopeless every day.' The constraints are such that 'an effective economic policy for democratic socialism is now scarcely possible within the empty vessel of the nation-state.'

The PCI

The Italian Communist party reached the same conclusion by a different road. The strategy of the Italian road to socialism, pioneered by Togliatti, was a necessary stage in order to achieve a rejection of the Soviet model of the transition to socialism and a recognition of the specificities of the national terrain. This led to the phase of Eurocommunism which, in Enrico Berlinguer's conception, assumed that the division between the social-democratic and communist wings of the European labour movement could be overcome. More than 10 years on from its inception we can see that eurocommunism was really an attempt to achieve a 'historic compromise' between West European socialism and communism for the construction of an independent Europe.

The phase of 'eurocommunism' is now clearly over. Nevertheless it has enabled the PCI to achieve lasting European recognition. The response of the socialist parties has been varied. Most continental socialist parties have been at least prepared to examine the terms of Berlinguer's European compromise. The German SPD has been the most positive and is now, on international issues, the closest party to the PCI. From the British Labour party there has been a deafening silence, but then its lack of interest in European questions has become nothing short of astonishing.

Even the Swedish Social Democratic party (SAP) is 'europeanising' itself. Olof Palme, in his last article written for an international audience, appeared convinced that not even 'exceptional' Sweden could escape the complex network of constraints that the internationalisation of the economy was establishing.

This does not make the SAP a 'Europeanist' party: Sweden's neutrality and her non-membership of the EEC tend to underline her separateness from the rest of Europe. Yet Sweden's industrial structure is so deeply integrated with that of the rest of Europe that the SAP is looking at Europe with renewed interest and is keen to participate in a concerted European economic recovery programme.

The exceptional achievements of what has been the most successful case of social democracy in power (the most egalitarian welfare state in Western Europe and uninterrupted electoral success from 1932 to 1976) should not disguise the fact that the SAP, its imaginative foreign policy notwithstanding, was wedded to a strategy of a national road to socialism and to an excessive statist management of society until the crisis of the 1970s. This led to its first important defeat and to the beginning of a period of self-criticism, of which the most important result was the Meidner Plan which sought to combine decentralised economic management and industrial democracy. Returned to office in 1982 and supported by the 'eurocommunist' Swedish Communist party (5.4% in 1985) SAP faces serious economic proble 'Social-democracy in a single country unlikely to work as well as in the past

European problems

Europeanism assumes that if it is necessary to have some form of supranational power in order to attempt to control transnational economic processes then this power must attempt to obtain some of the popular legitimacy national governments have. Here too the PCI has been the most active. It has been the foremost advocate of the democratisation of the EEC, supporting a long-term plan for political union. This plan, named after Altiero Spinelli, an independent socialist elected to the European parliament in the PCI list, was opposed by the British, Danish and Greek Socialists, but Mitterrand (who had direct experience of the dangers of go-it-alone reflation) supported it enthusiastically and was followed, albeit a little less enthusiastically, by the rest of his party and, eventually, by the SPD.

The Europeanist trend also recognises that the transition to the so-called information or electronics society has caught the divided European national states unprepared to face the American and Japanese challenge and the new international division of labour. Consequently, it advocates increased European economic co-operation. The aim is to develop a European industrial policy, particularly in the fields in which Europe has lost ground against Japan and the USA; aerospace, telecommunications, office equipment, optical instruments, automobile and, above all, electronics. This policy requires

the EEC is, in the final analysis, nothing more than a rich man's club

an adequate monetary and trade policy. This may entail a single currency for extra-European trade and a European tariff preference system directed specifically against Japanese and American protectionism. 'Balkanised' European production and distribution cannot compete with the organisational strength of Japan and the USA.

The most important steps taken in this direction are due to French initiatives; the Arianne project for the orbiting of satellites, the Airbus project for the building of

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commercial aircrafts and the E'sprit project (European Strategic Programme for Research and Development in Information Technology) which aims to finance integrated research in electronics. The Eureka project started off as Mitterrand's European answer to SDI (Star Wars), but has now become much more concerned with civilian-orientated technological research. A number of non-EEC countries, such as Austria and Finland, have joined the programme.

This brings us to the question of greater European autonomy in the field of defence. This is where the differences between the parties are at their most acute. The SPD and the PCI have emphasised that détente must not be allowed to rest exclusively on a dialogue between the US and the USSR; there must also be a European initiative. The French Socialists, after their absurd support for the installation of Cruise and Pershing missiles in Europe (outside France), now oscillate between 'nuclear nationalism' and Europe as a nuclear third force. The first position has majority support in France because it is upheld by all gaullist forces as well as by the French Communist party, but the second has growing support within the Socialist party. Needless to say, neither of these positions is popular with the bulk of the European Left, though, realistically, it must be recognised that there is no support whatsoever for unilateralism in France.

The centrist parties

The most obvious case of a centrist party (with the British SDP) has been the Italian Socialist party (PSI). It has welcomed Cruise missiles in Sicily and has deliberately sought to become the most pro-American Italian party.

Under the leadership of the present prime minister, Bettino Craxi, it has divested itself of much of its traditional socialist culture and language, accepting one of the central arguments of the new Right: that the shrinking of the working class, the technological revolution, the bureaucratic nature of the welfare state, the lack of credibility of the trade union movement, are all tell-tale signs that the great historical era of socialism is over. The PSI thought it could supplant the PCI by appealing to new emergent middle classes in the name of efficiency and modernity. Unfortunately for Craxi, the PCI has modernised itself sufficiently to withstand the challenge.

There are signs that the PSI is beginning to reconsider its policies. Craxi has modified his outspoken Atlanticist position since Italian national pride and its special Middle East interests were totally disregarded by the USA during the 'Achille Lauro' incident last year. More recently, he has tried to contain Reagan's provocative manoeuvres against Libya.

Like the PSI, the Spanish Socialists (PSOE), led by prime minister Felipe Gonzalez, have cultivated an image of youth, moderation, pragmatism and modernity. Like most 'centrist' parties, the PSOE offers a commitment to social justice without excessive state intervention. The combination of attractive leadership, moderation, a skilful use of the mass media and, above all, the promise to integrate Spain into the European family of democracies proved electorally irresistible and ensured victory at the 1982 polls. The lack of a specific socialist economic programme or of a mass organisation proved no handicap.

The main 'achievement' of the PSOE has been to produce a majority in favour of NATO *against* both progressive public opinion *and* the Right. This has probably reversed the anti-socialist tide which was developing, and Gonzalez now stands a very good chance of being re-elected in October.

He, however, has kept a foot in the Europeanist camp because he has promised that Spain will not join NATO's military command and will remain nuclear-free, and that US military personnel in Spain will be reduced.

The distinctiveness of Pasok

The PSOE and the PSI may have problems but the centrist Portuguese Socialist party (PSP) is in great difficulties, having dropped from 36 to 20% in the October 1985 elections. Most of the votes lost went to a new 'mould-breaking' party led by former President Eanes. The PSP has had to seek to improve its relations with the super-traditionalist Portuguese CP (which, electorally speaking, is not doing at all badly; it is now the second communist party in the EEC with 15.5% in 1985). The two parties joined forces in the final round of the election of the president of the republic, thus ensuring the victory of the former Socialist leader Mario Soares with 52.28% of the popular vote.

The Greek Socialist party (Pasok) evades any easy categorisation. It has some of the features of the centrist party (charismatic leader, media politics, no great concern for ideology or tradition) but it is too left-wing, too anti-American and too anti-European to be centrist. What the Greek Left does teach us is that electoral support, however massive, may not be sufficient to carry out policies developed in opposition. At the last elections (1985), Pasok obtained 45.8% of the vote and the pro-soviet Greek Communist party (KKE) 9.9%. This makes the Greek Left the strongest in Europe at present with over 55% of the vote – all of which is anti-NATO and anti-EEC. Yet this made not the slightest difference. Under Pasok, Greece stays in NATO and in the EEC. No left-wing party has ever been able to achieve what De Gaulle did: unilateral disengagement from NATO.

No general model

This survey of the state of the Left in Europe has not been undertaken in order to unearth a model to be imported and copied but rather to delineate the kind of general approaches currently pursued. All three options presented have problems and none of them guarantees electoral success. Traditionalism dominates only in the Greek, French and Portuguese Communist parties – all parties with little prospect of facing the test of government in the near future. Centrism, though not a serious option for committed socialists, stands as a warning of where excessively uninhibited revisionism may lead.

Though full of risks the construction of a Left Europeanism seems to me to be the most realistic and valid perspective. To suggest, as I do, that the era of the nation-state and of national roads to socialism is coming to an end does not mean that parties can ignore their national environment. It means rather that they must define their own line on the basis of an understanding of the interconnection between their national society and the international context.

In theory all three options are available to the British Labour party. However most of its centrists decamped five years ago into the SDP and its traditionalists are either isolated or having second thoughts. So far, as we have seen during the Westland affair, it hesitates to face the sole realistic political line it can now take: Europe. It may believe that, in these difficult times, it is better to have no policies and no thoughts, particularly in this field. It would be a serious error, because as long as this state of affairs continues not only will the Labour party remain, in European terms, an irrelevancy, but it will have failed, once again, to define Britain's wider role in Europe. □

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THE DARK SIDE OF THE SUN

An interview with Clare Short by Frankie Rickford

Labour MP Clare Short's bill to outlaw 'page three' style pictures of semi-naked women in newspapers got a first reading in the Commons after a unique display of leud, jeering contempt from Tory men. Since then, she's received up to 400 letters a day supporting her stand and succeeded in acutely embarrassing the party so keen to claim for itself the causes of decency and morality.

What gave you the idea of introducing this bill?

I sort of stumbled into it. I didn't plan it at all. I was in the House because Winston Churchill was introducing his Obscene Publications bill. I wasn't too concerned about his bill, but rather that he wouldn't use up all his time and that then the old Enoch Powell Embryo Research bill, which is really to do with the treatment of infertility and helping couples who know they've got congenital illnesses in their family, would be re-introduced by a guy called Hargreaves.

So a number of us who'd been involved in the battle against the Powell bill stayed to make sure the Hargreaves bill wasn't reached. I was sitting there listening to all these wretched speeches from Tories saying the country's worried by the rising tide of sex crimes and violent crimes, which is true, and therefore you've got to vote for this ridiculous bill. At that stage Winston Churchill's bill said that certain visual images, in all circumstances, would be obscene, and they included things like masturbation and then weird things like cannabilism and cruelty to animals or humans, which would have meant that pictures from Vietnam were illegal. It was absolute. I got more and more irritated so in the end I got up and made a short speech saying it was outrageous to mislead the country into thinking that the bill would do anything about these two things that people were worried about and if they really were concerned about sexual crime and treatment of women, why didn't they start with something much more blatant and obvious like page three. And I said I'd introduce a 10 minute rule bill. I was making it up as I went along because I was feeling angry. I then marched off and voted against the Winston Churchill bill.

I got publicity for suggesting the page three bill, so on I went with it. I believed in it, I didn't have any doubt that this was the right approach. I started getting letters from women predominantly, and some of them were from Mary Whitehouse-type women. But the overwhelming majority were ordinary working women, young mums, women who were feeling something really rotten was going on in society and that there's some link between the whole attitude to women and sexual crime. When I made my speech introducing the bill the Tories misbehaved in crude and revolting way. And I got hundreds of letters. There were 300-400 letters every day from lovely women, saying 'please don't be upset at the awful way they behave, we agree with you, keep going . . .' And on it's gone since there. It's quite remarkable the chord it seems to have struck. I didn't sit back and make a great political calculation. And I suppose I was part of the chord too.

What do you think introducing the bill has achieved if it hasn't had a second or third reading?

I don't accept that we can't get it passed. It might not get a second reading because there's no time allotted to this kind of bill. But, when Winston Churchill's bill, which is now very heavily modified, comes out of committee and back to report stage, I will move a new clause containing exactly the same principle. So there will be time for considerable debate and another vote and we'll have to see what the Conservative party do. They turn out in big numbers to vote for Winston Churchill's bill. Mrs Thatcher came back to the Commons to vote on the private member's bill which is unusual. They're finding this all highly embarrassing. I can't believe that in overwhelming numbers they're going to vote it down. So if his bill becomes law, the clause on page three will be there. If his bill falls, then we'll look for another parliamentary means. But it would have been passed twice in the House of Commons. And, apart from that, it's raised the debate up and down the country and all sorts of people are talking about it which is healthy in itself.

Do you think what you've done is expose the massive holes in the Right's position on sexual morality?

There are massive holes and loads of hypocrisy. I just stumbled into exposing them. And it's nice.

It must have been very difficult for you to raise the question in the first place, given the response you probably expected to get.

Parliament is a tough place you know, whatever you say. If you talk about unemployment or say rude things about the Tories on race, they give you a hard time. So, to some extent, if you're going to function there, you have to get used to being able to take that kind of thing. I was bit worried at the possibility of highly personalised comment, which to some degree happened. But the great wave of supportive letters and messages from women more than outweighed it and made it really a rather lovely feeling. All that goodness out there and the solidarity amongst women was very nice indeed.

Do you think that censorship is the right way to deal with the way that women are represented in the media, their sexual objectification?

The way women are portrayed has to be dealt with in a million and one different ways. And this is one way. I don't accept that there's a problem about this because it's censorship. Obviously censorship's a bad word, and we all say 'oh gosh, I'm not in favour of that'. But what are we talking about? We've got the Obscene Publications Act and it does impose some limits on what can be in newspapers. So it isn't a question of either no censorship or some, it's an argument about where the line should be drawn. Personally

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I don't feel that it's at all about censorship. I voted against the Winston Churchill bill as I believe that freedom of debate and artistic creativity is absolutely crucial to any decent society.

You mentioned in your speech to the House that you thought men ought to have the right to buy pornographic magazines if they wanted to and that, therefore, the bill didn't include magazines.

It's regrettable that men do choose to buy them and I hope we can reach a stage one day where they don't need them because they are degrading to human beings. And it's sad and awful that men appear to need such images of women and of sexuality. It's a distortion of any kind of healthy notion of sex and sexual relationships between men and women. But, at this stage in this society, to attempt to remove them would be very dangerous – it would create all sorts of black marketing in pornography. So what I'm saying is: newspapers are extremely public things that are aimed at men, women and children, there are women's pages, there are puzzles for children, they are brought into households, they lie around on kitchen tables, they're read on buses. And having such images within them means that they're foisted on all sorts of people who didn't choose them and don't want them.

And they're legitimised. At least if pornographic magazines are kept on the top shelf at newsagents, and back to front, there's a sense in which looking at them is seen as illicit.

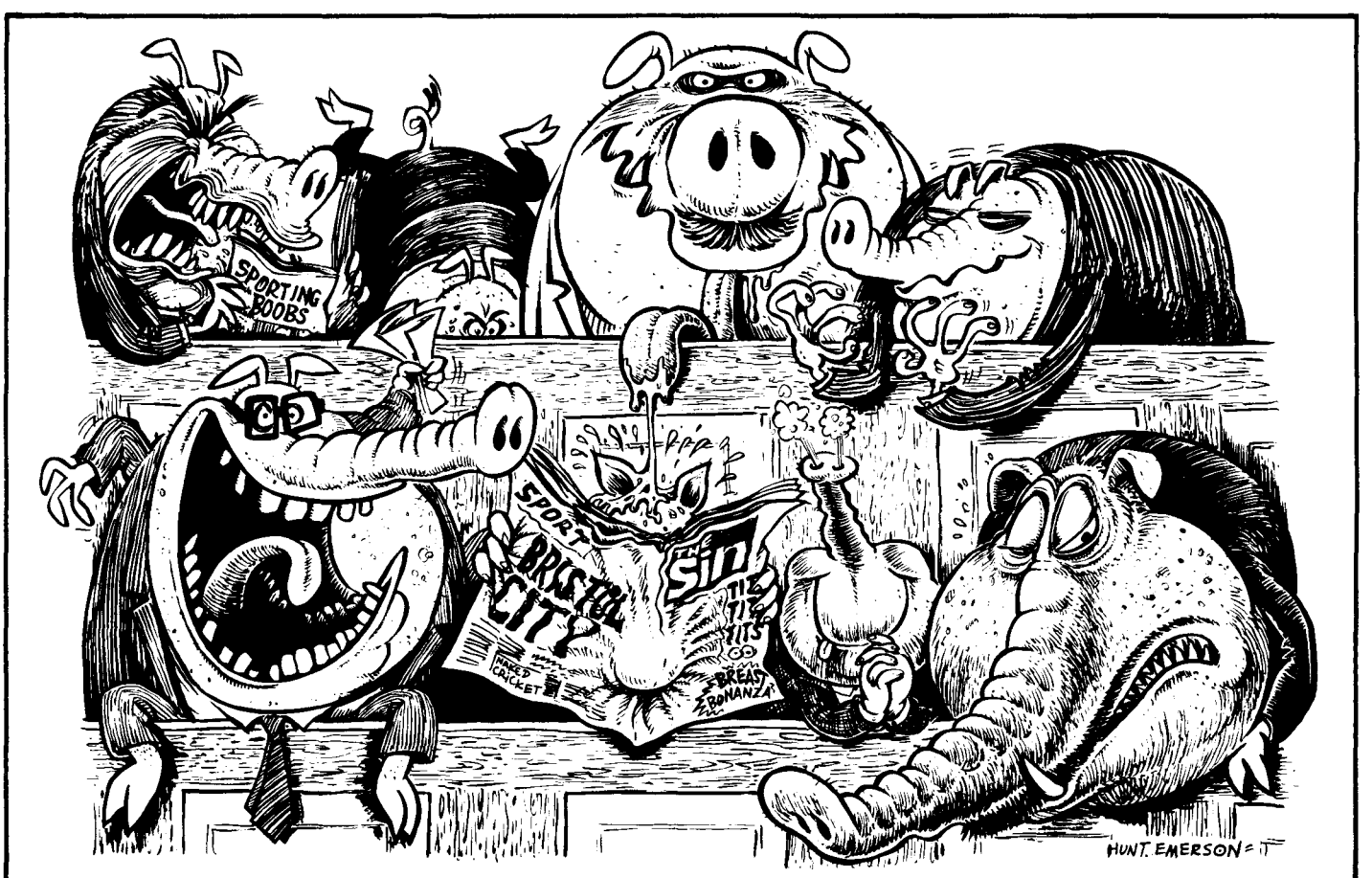
There's something wrong with it, you have to hide it and go away and look at it furtively. And that's how it should be. That's the symbolism of the way in which they're allowed.

What response have you had from Labour MPs – women and men – in the House?

I didn't prepare the ground particularly well. I thought, on the day, that no one would oppose me and they'd just let it through and want it to die away. I didn't believe that the Tories would be willing to expose themselves in the way in which they did. So I hadn't, for example, gone round and asked people to be there as there might be a vote. I had talked to people like Jo Richardson whom I'm close to. Then I'd asked a number of women to sponsor the bill.

Were they all Labour?

There was one Tory woman who sponsored it – Anna McCurley. I asked two others who didn't agree to do so: Janet Fookes, who's got quite a good record on women's issues, and Virginia Bottomly, who stands up for women's rights rather better than most Tories. Most Labour women I asked agreed. Some of the men said later it was wrong to ask women only. I don't think it was wrong at all. So there was this little session in the Commons. There was a good attendance because we were about to have an economic debate. On our side they were very supportive to me. As the jeering started, they were giving me the 'hear hears' at the appropriate moment, but some of that is just pure party loyalty. Then the vote was very good. I thought that was interesting given I hadn't prepared the ground. It was a good test. I think Labour men are changing because of the women in the party. I suppose I should give them some credit in themselves, but they are now aware and conscious that women in the party are moving forward



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and making demands and watching them, and that's a very healthy course.

You've grabbed the rug from under the Tories' feet to some extent but hasn't the Labour party been evasive on this kind of question for too long?

It isn't just the Labour party. I think progressive people and the women's movement have been very uncomfortable about censorship, perhaps because of the hang over from the 60s and the liberalism of that time. We've all had the problem. We thought we shouldn't talk about censorship or we would be seen as being reactionary and pro-Whitehouse. This debate broke through that a bit, but we need to go further.

You've written to Mrs Thatcher and asked her to clarify her position on the subject. How do you think she will respond?

It came up at prime minister's question time so I asked her whether she agreed with the majority of women that these pictures should be abolished in mass circulation newspapers. She pretended not to understand me and said this is all a matter for the Obscene Publications Act. She's not that stupid or ill-informed; she was ducking the issue. So I've written to say this and to ask her for an answer. I imagine she's in quite a dilemma. I mean there's The *Sun* in all its nastiness, supporting her politics avidly. You see she came back to the Commons to vote for the Winston Churchill bill because she wants to be seen as part of the forces of decency. I imagine she doesn't know what to do: she doesn't want to support me and she doesn't want to oppose me. That's good.

The Sun *is running a 'stop crazy Clare' campaign . . .*

It's great, it shows they're really scared. They ran this piece which was sort of 20 things you ought to know about 'crazy Clare'. Someone rang me up about it and I thought it would be terrible but it wasn't. They ran these pictures everyday with stop 'crazy Clare' write in to our freepost and, then, Samantha says 'she's only doing it for publicity', which seems a remarkable thing for Samantha to say.

Until now Tory MPs have been raising the moral questions. Why do you think they have compromised themselves so over this issue?

God knows why. They've made fools of themselves and I think it's yet another exposure of their hypocrisy. It's wonderful. Somebody from Geoffrey Dickens' local Conservative party, which is chaired by a woman, sent me a letter complaining about his behaviour. There was this enormous public reaction of disgust at the way the Tories behaved – quite a lot of Tories disapproved. That is the great contradiction that they occupy and it's being exposed more and more.

How do you see this Tory perception of sexual morality and how does it differ from Mary Whitehouse's?

In her case, it feeds into a much bigger censorship. She's attached herself to the notion that war reporting, for example, should be limited, because the reporting of Vietnam undermined the will of American youth to fight. So she extends censorship beyond sex in a very dangerous way. Also, it's a sort of crudish anti-sex 'sex is dangerous and nasty' attitude, that sex should only be allowed for procreation. It is anti-gay, and linked up with being anti-abortion and seeing women's role as only mothers and housewives. It's a whole system of attitudes that are conservative about the way society should be organised and about women's freedom. Now these Tory men are attached to this reactionary morality. But some of the posturing about sex crime is an attempt at populism. Take Geoffrey Dickens, who tries to put himself forward as the great defender of children from sexual molestation, which is not the same thing as a genuine concern for the welfare of children in all aspects of their life, otherwise you'd think he would want to diminish such risks.

But there are all sorts of contradictions in politics and in people. You've got lots of people who don't fit neatly into categories on these moral questions. It's those contradictions that we need to explore in order to win a much bigger alliance for progressive change. The Whitehouse's and Geoffrey Dickens' see sex as a potent force that could break up neat little social structures that keep sex within marriage and women within marriage and women as child bearers and housewives. They want to keep sex in its place in order to preserve all those structures.

Are you going to pursue this issue?

Yes. I mean to keep it going and not give in and allow it to be a tokenistic protest. And where we go after this, I don't know. I mean I would need to be part of a discussion about where women think we ought to go next . . .

To what extent do women MPs work together in the House of Commons. Is there any kind of forum for discussion for women there?

The women's movement has done a lot by saying to women that it's legitimate and good to like each other and support each other. That feeling is there in the atmosphere in the House, and there's one room, for example, that is traditionally used by Labour women where there's quite a good, informal atmosphere.

In terms of the Tories, it's much more complicated. Some of the Tory women are as objectionable in every sense as Tory men – women like Edwina Currie who lines up hard on every right-wing issue and takes the wrong position on every issue to do with women. I wouldn't even think of approaching her. But there are a few that one might approach on specifically women's issues. But it doesn't go so far for me, or I think any of the Labour women MPs, as to actually socialise with them. If you do, you soon bump into the whole of the rest of your politics. But on some issues, it's worth getting that alliance when you can.

You say that it's nice to have that room, to have that opportunity to socialise, but from the outside the Commons seems such a horrendously taxing, hostile environement.

It's a funny place. Most people think that this is the oldest club in the world, as though it's one institution that you have to join or not join. It's actually lots of different people working in different ways. Within it you have friendships and you work on some of the issues that you think are the most important in the world, which keeps you going and is something worth doing. After all, we all have our constituencies and going there is very replenishing, that's the real world and that's what it's all for. So, honestly, it's not as hard to work here as people imagine and it's not as hard for women as women imagine. That's my experience. I'm not just saying it. I mean it. □

Clare Short will be participating in Women Alive on July 5-6, a weekend event for women sponsored by Marxism Today. *For further details contact (01) 251 4406.*

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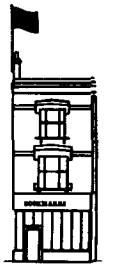

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Letters

TATTOOED FOREHEADS

I must admit that Sara Mills and Patrick Williams (*MT* April) rather baffled me. For a moment I suspected a misprint. Anarchists lobbying their MPs?

Are you sure you didn't mean *lobbing* them. . . with bricks? And marching alongside women in twin-sets and pearls? I can only conclude that the authors of this article are either hopelessly ignorant or inexcusably dishonest. The contribution of anarchists to the animal liberation movement has been enormous, and any serious article on the subject would have to take account of this fact.

Presumably it is too much to expect of *Marxism Today* to raise itself above the level of the gutter press and actually *inform* its readership? One thing intrigues me: how did the authors know they were anarchists? Did they perhaps have 'fuck off' tattooed on their foreheads?

Tracy Walker, Milton Keynes

ANIMAL CAPITAL

Many good points were argued in the article by Sara Mills and Patrick Williams (*MT* April). It contained, however, a very misleading reference to Marx. The writers suggested that the passage quoted from *Capital* demonstrated that Marx held a derogatory view of animals, and believed that they should be regarded merely as brute matter to be used in the process of production.

The section from which this quote is taken forms part of a *description* of the historical development of the capitalist system of production. Rather than arguing that animals *ought* to be treated merely as instruments of labour, Marx is simply observing that in the earliest period of human history this is how animals were treated.

Richard English, Oxford

CORRECTION

Stuart Hall's interview of Jesse Jackson (*MT* March) was great. I'd make one correction however. The first black to run for the presidency was not Jackson, as you stated, but a black woman, Shirley Chisolm.

Chisolm, a New York City congressional representative, ran a nationwide campaign for the Democratic nomination in 1972.

Lois Quam, Oxford

STICKY QUESTIONS

The interview with Jesse Jackson (*MT* March) symbolises an approach to the issues which *Marxism Today* has increasingly adopted: going for the big name, hard sell figure. There are advantages to this approach – *MT* is hot on topicality and newsworthy relevance. Not to be sneezed at. But there is a price, too.

An interview with 'America's leading black politician' is not a substitute for a proper policy on race. The unfortunate characteristic of oppressed groups, classes and the oppressed sex is that they do not throw up an abundance of 'star figures' – but they may have articulate activists who have penetrating insights and practical knowledge. It is only too easy to be dazzled by the stardom and avoid posing the sticky and difficult questions.

I was amazed to find that Jesse Jackson was not asked about his attitude to Luis Farrakhan and the dangers of the re-emergence of anti-Semitism in the black community. Why was he not pressed about racial division in the labour movement or about the role of black business, ie, the issues where race and class intersect?

Jude Bloomfield, Birmingham

NO VOICE

Jesse Jackson (*MT* March) states that British black people do not have a voice in our society, and advises us to pursue representation in various institutions. In the USA there are black mayors, black senators, black police chiefs, black executives etc.

However, the Americans have one fundamental advantage over the black British. They enjoy a greater degree of acceptance. After all they are now the ninth or tenth generation. In Britain we are only the second generation. We do not enjoy that degree of acceptance and this contributes to our feelings of alienation.

To reverse this, British black people need to be mobilised, and to be mobilised we need leadership. To tell us to participate is easy. We need a civil rights leader to teach us how to participate. When we conquer our alienation maybe we will be lucky enough, like Jackson, to contest the leadership of our country.

Leroy Witter, London

NEGATIVE FEATURE

To print John Lloyd's article (*MT* March) at this particular moment has, in my view, hampered one of the main thrusts of the campaign to win the public away from the 'scab' papers.

Whilst I accept that there were positive features in the piece, the theme running through the article came across to me as 'they brought it on themselves'. Equally the latter part of the article appeared to be a public relations exercise for the EETPU.

It is appropriate at times for certain points to be left unsaid, eg, unworked time, overtime, nepotism, elitism. We all know that certain practices operated, but the present assault by managements is to maximise profits as the article states and smash the closed shops with our unions ensnared in the web of anti-union legislation.

The force of argument should be used to compel Murdoch and Maxwell to negotiate with print and other unions, not to lay the emphasis on negative features. Lloyd's article did just that, helping to divide the forces trying to get some sanity into the introduction of new techniques.

John Jackson, vice president Glasgow & West of Scotland Branch Sogat '82

SOCIALIST SUCCESS

I have just read the article on the GLC (*MT* April). Wonderful to be analysing a socialist success for a change.

I think the point about defining the political agenda by making democracy central to it rather than efficiency and economy is an important one. Yet, as I read the article I could not help wondering how the economics of this work out.

It seems to me that a crucial aspect of any socialist policy implemented successfully, is how it worked economically.

I hope that May's issue contains another article on the GLC outlining the economic basis to their policies, what innovations they made and whether they worked. My own personal experience of GLC financial policies has not been encouraging.

Sally-Anne Lomas, London

SERIOUS CHARGES

The implications in Davie Laing's letter (*MT* April) are that my reply to Sam Aaronovitch was in opposition to Communist party policy, and that as the party's representative on the Editorial Board of *World Marxist Review* I have blocked the publication of articles by authors expressing our party's point of view. Those are serious charges. So let's get the record straight.

The CP's special congress last May specifically declared that the present alternative economic strategy remains the party's policy until it is changed or if it is changed *after* a national discussion.

If Laing had leafed through the pages of *WMR* or glanced at the index of authors over the last few years, he would have found amongst the contributors three current political committee members, as well as George and Betty Matthews, Monty Johnstone and Dave Cook.

Bert Ramelson, Sydenham

WASTED OPPORTUNITY

Your supplement on co-ops (*MT* March) was a major disappointment. The meagre space left for text was long on description and short on any marxist *analysis*. What a terrible waste of an opportunity.

You could, for example, have looked at co-ops as part of an alternative economic strategy to be pursued by a Labour government; perhaps most crucially as pointers to the *workers' control* that any anti-capitalist strategy will need to be founded upon.

Do co-ops offer a small-scale possibility of building up the elements of a new society within the old – building up businesses, viable economic units, based on a commitment to social and personal change? What happens to co-ops if they are successful and expand in size and numbers? Can co-ops combine their strength and experience to devise a successful market strategy that doesn't compromise their social objectives?

What about the co-operative societies? Is a major revival possible by linking up with the energy of the new worker co-operatives, housing co-ops, etc? Couldn't their trading experience and market share be of help to workers' co-ops in particular? And then there's the attitude of trade unions to co-ops – can social vision overcome sectional interests?

Martin Meteyard, Green City Wholefoods, Glasgow

MALE ABUSE

As a social worker employed in the field of child protection it was with interest and anticipation that I turned to Emily Driver's article (*MT* March).

The statement that child abusers are predominantly male is true only of the sexual abuse of children. In cases of physical abuse the statistics show a much more even distribution between men and women as abusers. According to an American study, about 52% of physical abuse is by males.

Secondly, while it seems beyond doubt that abuse is found in all socio-economic groups, there is empirical evidence that physical abuse occurs more frequently in working class families. Further, there is evidence that as unemployment rises so the incidence of physical abuse rises. The apparently higher incidence of physical abuse in working class families is not a matter which requires the allocation of blame but is, rather, something which bears investigation. It may well be something that can be analysed in economic terms.

Emily Driver's article is useful in that it expresses a feminist analysis of the sexual abuse of children. It is by no means clear that the analysis can be extended to other forms of child maltreatment such as physical abuse.

Colin Dyer, Bradford

We welcome your letters for the June issue. They should be no longer than 200 words and arrive at the office no later than May 9. The editor reserves the right to cut letters.

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VIEWPOINT

Worker Co-operation?

JOHN CHRISTENSEN
Worker capitalism

It was very encouraging to see the supplement on co-ops in the March issue of *Marxism Today* but I have to admit that its failure to move beyond the descriptive and to address some of the key issues facing worker co-operatives was a great disappointment.

Undoubtedly the renaissance of the worker co-operative movement is one of the more positive results of the past two decades and offers an alternative to the 'nationalise or municipalise' approach which dominated Leftist thinking for the greater part of this century.

There are, however, a number of problems confronting the movement, above all how (and whether) to develop worker co-operatives beyond the small business sector (most employ between three to 20 workers) into the arena of large-scale manufacturing and construction. There are plenty of examples of worker co-operation on a large-scale, especially if one looks to the current state of the art in Italy and Spain, and there is obviously a need to research the different means whereby workers, for example the employees of the BL Landrover division, can buy out and manage an enterprise of that scale on a co-operative basis.

Marxists are normally somewhat ambivalent towards worker co-operatives, partly, one suspects, because the great man himself was in two minds about them. On the one hand he damned co-operatives with faint praise – 'islands of socialism in a sea of capitalism' – and on the other hand, he fiercely criticised them for being diversionary and utopian. There can be no doubt, however, that he admired the progress of the co-operative sector and thought that their experiments provided a clear example for a future socialised economy.

The Left is still divided in its attitude towards the worker co-operative movement. In recent years a large number of Labour-controlled local authorities have actively promoted co-operatives through specially created development agencies, and these initiatives have been very successful. On the other hand, the trade unions (with a few notable exceptions) have been somewhat lukewarm in their attitude towards worker co-operatives and towards employee share ownership and partnership arrangements, eg, the John Lewis Partnership.

There are signs, however, that the idea of worker ownership, and some form of worker control, is gaining support from a large body of workers. Partly this results from the rapid growth of Employee Share Ownership Plans (EPOS) and share ownership in general. This has been boosted by Thatcher's success in popularising the idea of 'shareholder' economy, which has been achieved both through a wider spread of equity ownership, and through privatisation programmes which have made employee shareholding available on bonus or priority terms. This is illustrated by Treasury estimates that over 90% of eligible employees have acquired shares in their company through privatisation.

It is quite unrealistic to describe EPOS as worker co-operation, but it does offer trade unions a means of negotiating over profit bonuses and working conditions and, if moves were made to relax the legal limits on the proportion of equity available to employees, it could eventually develop into some form of employee controlled arrangement. Incidentally, promotion of EPOS is one of the aims of the Unity Trust sponsored by the trade unions, so there should be no shortage of funds for workers who wish to buy shares in their own company. Furthermore, the Save-As-You-Earn Option Scheme, introduced in 1980, offers tax concessions over a five year period to workers who wish to buy shares in their company.

There are, of course, many reason for the labour movement to be suspicious of this form of 'worker capitalism', but there is no doubt that share ownership has become acceptable and widespread among a large body of skilled and unskilled workers. This change of attitude and opportunity opens a new area of debate for the Left. In particular there is a need to address the issue of how worker ownership through equity can be extended to worker control though co-operation.

GEOFF HODGSON
New style co-operation

All the evidence suggests that co-ops – old and new – survive, even flourish, when a number of conditions exist. They must be genuine in that they serve their members – working people – they must be efficient, correctly appraise their role in capitalist society and they must adapt to change through democratic mechanisms.

Although many readers of *Marxism Today* are amongst the 8.5m members of existing retail co-ops and some will be members of new co-ops, it seems odd that the potential of co-operation as a form of social organisation conducive to socialism eludes so many otherwise perceptive people.

Space prevents more than a reference to co-operation as an international phenomenon of the greatest significance in socialist countries, and in both developed and underdeveloped capitalist countries. 500m co-operators in 72 countries in the International Co-operative Alliance is just one fact to grasp.

In Britain, in any strategy to put us irreversibly on the road to socialism, a stronger co-op movement of both old and new co-ops is an essential component. There is, however, an immediate need to save what is left of the retail co-op movement and re-build it. Roughly 5% of Britain's trade is co-operative. Big enough for an effective fightback.

Last autumn, it did seem that the 30 years' decline in co-op trading had been halted. This spring it seems that although there has been no further decline, the upswing has not continued. A dangerous state of equilibrium exists. The information on which these assessments are made is based on an average, and the average hides great disparity in performance. At least half of the co-ops are in deep trouble. Yet, the other half show what can be done.

Co-ops in 1985 show a 3.7% increase in turnover; the other major 10 retailers show anything from 2.6% to 28.5%. Co-ops show a trading surplus of 1%; the other 10 show anything from 2.7% to 9.9.%. Of total surplus (consisting of dividend, tax and retention), the other 10 *retain* anything from 9% to 49%, whilst the co-op figure is minus 138. In short, the co-ops are taking a lot 'out of the business'. Moreover, an average trading surplus of 1% is a relative failure, for 2.5% is currently being attained in many segments of co-op trading. The co-ops can do better.

The response in some co-op circles is to call for trading in its narrowest sense, no

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politics, no education, no democracy, no frills and so on. Chase the market without regard to the links with working people. Leave the inner cities, high unemployment, the smaller outlets – drive for larger stores, privatise and franchise, even without safeguards. Hide the co-op identity. Assemble bigger units, without organic integration. Regard co-op members as an embarrassment, even a hindrance. Obscure and chip away at the co-op 'difference' – its *raison d'être*. Turn the corner from ownership and control by members – one vote irrespective of share-holding – to the capitalist concept where size is the determinant.

But these ideas and their forerunners are the reason for past decline, and must be rejected. The dilemma of the co-ops is to react to new trading conditions, and yet reflect those members who are older, have smaller incomes, are less mobile and have more fixed requirements. Fortunately, where there had been an intelligent appreciation of change and an understanding of co-operative principles, there has been success. Up-market trends, dictated by newer and younger members, without neglect of basics – therein lies the key to the future.

The involvement of the millions of co-op members in the running of their movement is essential. All those who hold power in the co-op and its auxiliary network of political, educational and consumer organisations are an elite, even if progressive. Intervention by co-op members who see the need for using the democratic machinery to get greater involvement is the next step. Such new forces should insist upon combining trading efficiency with democratic participation.Genuine social concern must be uppermost. Recently, campaigning by co-operators brought about a boycott of South African goods by the Co-operative Wholesale Society (CWS), most sections of the large Co-operative Retail Services (CRS) and many independent co-ops. Some loss of trade was expected. In the event, the opposite occurred and many people, not previously co-op shoppers, must have switched.

The co-op movement will not win its fight for more trade until it becomes better integrated. Co-op vested interests stand in the way. A common policy on trading, procurement, finance, publicity, advertising and sales promotion must be adopted. The CWS, the CRS and the top 12 co-ops must get together. It is hoped that the co-op congress will act up to its proud claim of being supreme and win support for such a body.

In rebuilding the British co-op movement, it does not necessarily mean that big is beautiful. Like the pits, the railways and much of Britain's basic industries, the tag 'uneconomic' has often been applied to co-op retail outlets, where a policy of planned replacement with community and shopper involvement might have been preferable. Nevertheless, there are certainly co-op shops that have persisted after their viability had obviously gone.

A revival of co-ops, a welcome for co-ops in new areas, a flexibility which characterises newer co-ops, and above all, a pride in co-ops as a democratic decision-making, dynamic opportunity for everyone to assert some control over life-style is needed.

We welcome your contributions to the Viewpoint section. Please write not more than 600 words and send it to the editorial office by May 9.

LAST MONTH, for instance, ***Marxism Today*** was quoted in the *Observer*, *Guardian* and *Financial Times*.

Not surprising since we carried a major interview with Denis Healey on defence policy.

Incidentally, it didn't please everyone. 'Denis will have to shut up in public', the *Observer* reported Robin Cook as saying.

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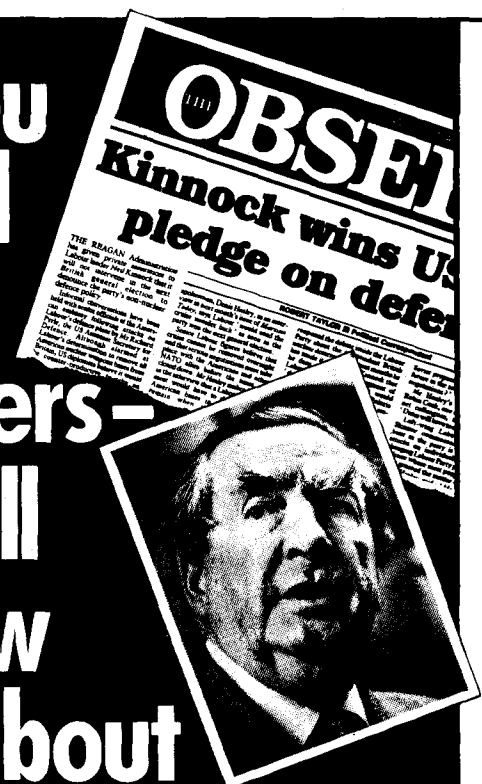

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MAYDAYS IN GLASGOW

Fiona MacMillan

Glasgow taxi drivers would seem to have made a strong impression on participants in Mayfest. Whoopi Goldberg was there two years ago, and said that every time she climbed into a taxi the driver told her, 'Glasgow's got an awfy reputation'. Marie Jones, of the Belfast theatre company Charabanc, recalls that every time she got into a taxi the driver would talk about Mayfest and what was happening when and where. A real test of the true popularity of a festival?

Mayfest was born in 1983, sub-titled 'Glasgow's International Festival of Popular Theatre and Music'. It had long been felt by prominent trade unionists and theatre workers that May Day, in a city with strong labour movement connections, should not be the end but the beginning of a celebration. Thus with donations from Equity and the Transport and General Workers' Union, the festival director, Feri Lean, was able to acquire a desk and a phone, and set about establishing an international festival.

photo: Mayfest

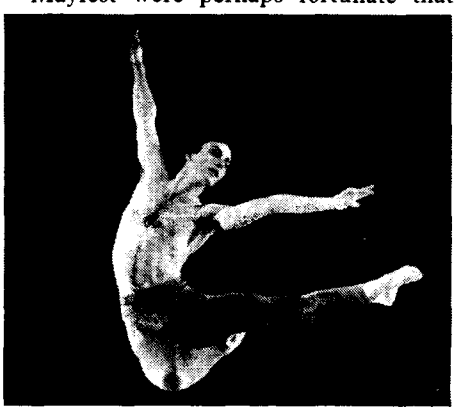
Street theatre: Glasgow school kids participate in the Mayfest too.

Three festivals later Mayfest could well claim to have achieved such international status. Why? 'Word of mouth, people just love coming,' says Feri, 'in 1984 the Cuban company Teatro Escumbray were here, this year we have two more Cuban performers coming because they were told everyone had such a great time.' A sentiment echoed by Marie Jones. 'It's the only festival Charabanc has been where we feel it has genuinely attempted to bring entertainment to everyone, more than Edinburgh or our own festival here in Belfast.'

The first Mayfest even took its organisers by surprise: 28,000 people came to see the shows and houses averaged 80%. And there was a surprising plea from those who didn't come. 'Suddenly the cry went up, what about us? Can we have something?' Community groups all over the city expressed an interest in hosting events. A community events organiser was appointed, and now Feri wonders why Mayfest is based in the city centre at all. Now companies visit the chic theatre clubs and the unemployed workers' centres and play at the Citizens' Theatre and Easterhouse Community Centre.

More importantly the community events have been participatory. This year a centrepiece will be a History of Govan, featuring the people of Govan, and scores of other groups will be presenting new plays. Community groups have also had the opportunity to present their shows in the city centre. They sometimes met with sparse audiences, as have the professional groups in the community venues – but it takes time to build up audiences.

Mayfest were perhaps fortunate that they began work at the same time as Glasgow district council decided to persuade the world and the city's citizens that 'Glasgow was Miles Better'. The district council have increased their grant aid from £30,000 in 1983 to £100,000 this year enabling the festival to be expanded from two to three weeks. Jean McFadden, council leader and chair of the Mayfest board of directors, did not see Mayfest as a cosmetic exercise and a cultural complement to Scotland's number one tourist attraction, the Burrell Collection. As she stated at Mayfest's second press conference, the slogan might be 'Glasgow's Miles Better' but for those living in the city's sprawling housing estates, who couldn't even afford the bus fare into the city centre, let alone a theatre ticket as well, there was not a lot to smile about. It is hoped that Mayfest's community events can at least give people an opportunity to see good professional theatre and music for as little as £1.



Mayfest 86: Christopher House, Canadian choreographer and dancer, will be at the Mitchell Theatre.

In the community: Charabanc theatre company will be performing *Gold in the Streets* at venues all over the city.

Feri Lean feels that Mayfest's success is due to the fact that the people of Glasgow simply took the festival to their hearts. Bars and restaurants open late and often have their own live entertainment. Organisations as diverse as the French Institute, the Labour party, the Scottish Postal Board, and McEwan's lager have sponsored events. As well as foreign theatre companies, Mayfest gives many Scottish companies the chance to present their work on a larger scale than usual, and to foreign critics who don't often get the chance to see Scottish companies. Although it is 35 years younger, Mayfest has found itself compared to the Edinburgh Festival. Not a comparison Mayfest necessarily approves of: 'We're two different festivals, with different histories, trying to do different things'. Mayfest has certainly not lived in the shadow of the Edinburgh Festival. With many companies making their only

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British appearance there, people have to travel to Glasgow to see them. In recent years Glasgow has become a somewhat fashionable place to visit, with its fine architecture, interesting museums and vibrant cultural life. Feri Lean is unperturbed by the 'trainloads of trendies' now in evidence during the festival. 'Essentially we're a festival for the people of Glasgow; if tourists come, well that's an added bonus'.

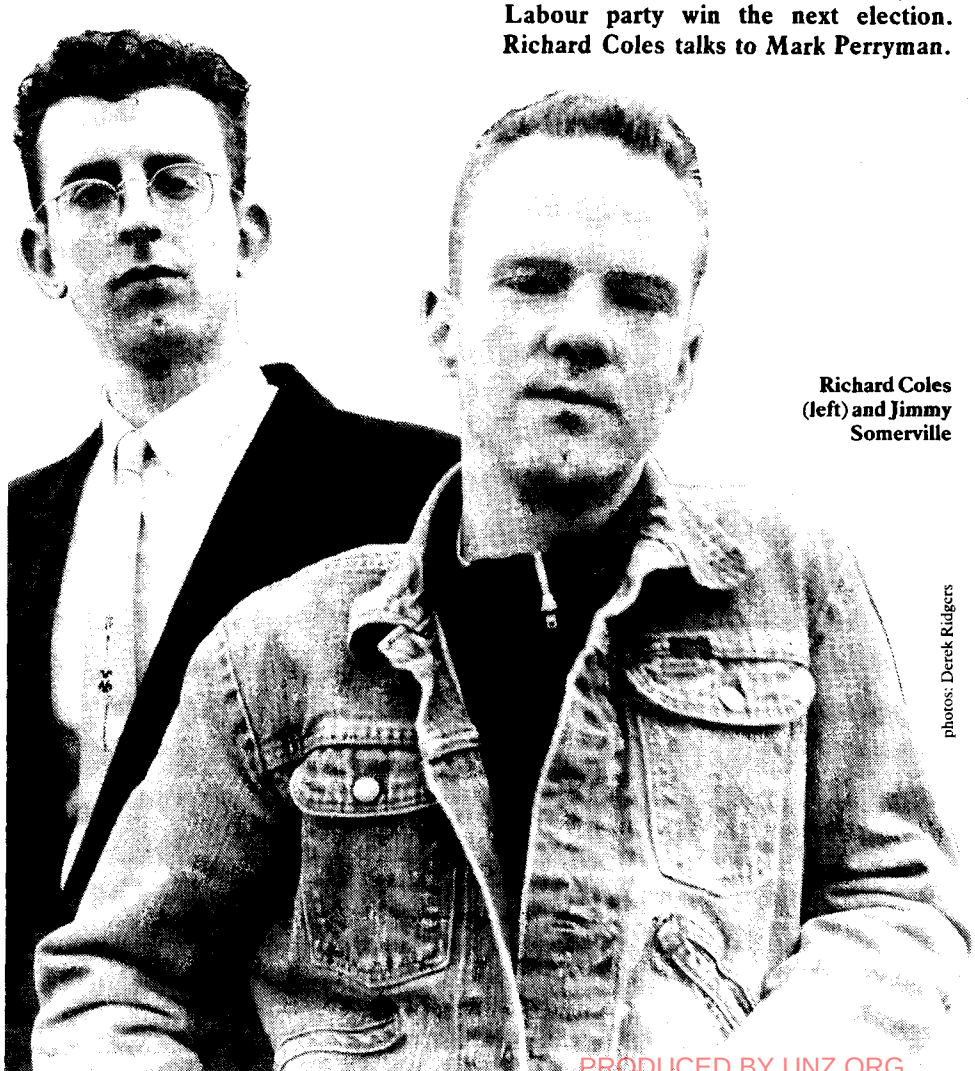
This year Mayfest, amongst many others, offers Japanese dancers, plays from Nicaragua, Sweden and Northern Ireland, a circus from Pollock; you can hear music in the street, in concert halls and bars. You can enjoy a firework spectacular, Scottish plays from John Byrne, Alastair Gray and Joe Corrie. Oh yes, there's also an opera recital in WD & HO Wills works canteen!

Mayfest runs from May 2–24. You can get further information about the programme from Mayfest, 7 Burgh Hall St., Glasgow G11 5LN. Tel: 041-334 3450.

COMING OUT OF THE COMMUNE

Interview with Richard Coles

Jimmy Somerville was for a year the lead vocalist of the openly gay pop group Bronski Beat. Having produced four hit singles and a best-selling LP, *The Age Of Consent*, the band seemed destined for a long career at the top. But in April 1985 Jimmy surprised the music press by leaving Bronski Beat – and shortly afterwards teamed up with Richard Coles, fellow gay political activist and a classically trained pianist to form 'The Communards'. Inspired by the spirit of the Paris Commune, the group will head out on their first UK tour later this month. With a hit single and a second, *Disenchanted*, about to be released, The Communards have helped to form Red Wedge, a broad left alliance of musicians committed to helping the Labour party win the next election. Richard Coles talks to Mark Perryman.



Richard Coles (left) and Jimmy Somerville

photos: Derek Ridgers

The Communards are already closely identified with gay politics, Red Wedge and a wide range of other causes. What danger is there of the band falling into a political ghetto?

There is a problem. It's something we have fallen into – to a certain extent. It's a very difficult one, because you don't fall into a ghetto, you're pushed into it, and if organisations like Radio One and the music press perceive you as political, then they push you that way.

What about your record company. How do they feel about your image?

There's a certain amount of confusion about how we're to be marketed. They made the mistake of seeing us as Bronski Beat Mark II because of Jimmy's involvement and Bronski Beat being such a successful band. They also made too many assumptions about us appealing to the same people. I don't think we do, I think we appeal to a slightly older market.

Well it's not exactly frenetic dance music is it . . .

No, but we do do some 'frenetic dance music' and the next single is going to be a dance record because . . . we like dancing. It's difficult because we don't fit into a convenient pigeon-hole and that's always going to create problems over marketing.

The Communards seem to be quite a loose and open alliance, are you trying to break down the traditional way a pop group is structured?

Yes, because the idea of being stuck with the same people, doing the same thing . . . is just not a nice way to earn a living. It's so boring to do just that. I've got certain projects which are really important to me, and Jimmy has as well. That's really good because when we do work together we enjoy it more. I'm also very concerned to get involvement from young musicians who might otherwise not have that sort of chance to break through.

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Would The Communards like eventually to have their own record label then?

You're talking a long way in the future. We simply don't have the means to do it, and anyway it isn't a good idea because if you look at the attempts by other bands at doing that they've all been huge failures. I'd much rather leave selling records to a record company because they know how to do it.

If that's the case, how will you help young musicians to break through, in practical terms?

Music workshops . . . that's something I'd really like to get involved in. On a grander scale, there's no jazz or rock or pop music school in this country. That's terrible. In America they have whole departments of universities devoted just to jazz. But again it's a matter of finding the time and the resources.

In what ways can you as a famous band relate to your audience?

Breezing in, answering a few questions, signing autographs, that's not the way things should be done at all. I want to set up day-long events where we can work in a workshop-kind-of-format. We've got it the wrong way round. It should be *us* asking the questions, we should ask young people about the role of pop music and things like that.

Do you intend to tour?

Yes, we've got a tour coming up in May.

Do you like touring?

Yes, I enjoy it a lot. Recording and touring is what I enjoy most of all. I've got a really 60s feeling about it all. It's so nice to be in contact with people. In all the local places we play we want to get in touch with local bands and have them doing some slots at some point in the evening. We're also working on the idea of taking a political worker along so we can co-ordinate some stalls, so people who come to see us can get access to us.

I want us to be associated with that kind of approach. It's very important to us to do this. I know you can't just set up a stall and expect everyone to come out socialists, but it's a good opportunity to use. For the majority of bands in this country, being in a band is just a device for separating children from their pocket-money, we want to separate them from their minds as well.

How does the band's music reflect your politics?

Jimmy and I write a lot of love-songs. I don't like to write a song which just goes something like, 'We hate Thatcher . . . Vote for Kinnock'. That's an awful, horrible thing to do. But a love-song from one man to another is a political statement, it's a political song, *that's* the way we want to do it. A celebration is far more immediate, it touches a chord in someone which is much more resonant than empty sloganising.

And those love-songs challenge a lot of members of the Labour party, trade unions, Communist party in a way slogans never will.

That's why it is so important we do associate ourselves with certain organisations and events, and that we are outspoken and don't make compromises. We don't want to be seen as pop stars, we want to be seen as ordinary people doing something, concerned with a situation.

How does your sexuality affect your views?

Obviously being gay is a major factor in somebody's life, informs a lot of their values and the music arises out of certain of these tensions. Sexuality is such a formative experience, at the one time personal and political. Also a sense of 'camp' is important to us.

What do you think of the way politics is run at the moment?

Politics certainly shouldn't be exclusive, it shouldn't be alienating. For people to get interested and involved in politics it has to be done on their terms, it's wrong for people to be expected to have a taste for committees and things like that. I don't think political activity should be confined to committee rooms, or picket lines, it should encompass absolutely everything.

Is that true at the moment?

There does seem to be a wider awareness these days that politics has to be dragged out of the committee rooms and on to the . . . boulevards.

What sort of political activity are you interested in getting involved in?

It is mass popular movements that I'd like to try and be part of, that's the main reason we got involved in Red Wedge, to try and establish a nationwide organisation like ARCI (an Italian cultural organisation, led by Communists, with over 1m members – *ed*) because that's so successful and has such a good effect. It would be great if we had that in this country.

One of the criticisms being made of Red Wedge by young people, gays, lesbians, women, black people is the close tie-up with the Labour party. How do you feel about those suspicions?

Oh, quite understandable. I'm no fan of the Labour party on its record, it's just a story of constant betrayal. I don't think of myself as naive about that. I certainly don't believe that if Kinnock wins the next election it's going to be the 'Dawn of the Age of Aquarius'. But what the Labour party does have is access to power and a national organisation.

And where do young people fit in?

It is important a dialogue exists between the Labour party and youth. Because it doesn't at the moment. The Labour party has singularly failed to represent the interests of young people, the only thing it has done is vaguely investigate YTS. They haven't got what I'd call a coherent youth policy. It's also important young people make their demands known to the Labour party and before that can happen you have to establish some sort of relationship with the party.

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Hasn't Red Wedge got to be organised on totally different grounds to the rather antiquated Labour party?

Its bureaucracy certainly militates against the aims and attempted achievements of organisations like Red Wedge. The problem is that when you're trying to organise something on completely new grounds, it's very difficult because everything is geared towards working in a certain way. What you have to do is establish a new way of working from the grassroots. That's another reason why Red Wedge always stresses that it's *not* the Labour party, we support the Labour party. We don't want to be 'The Labour party . . . The Musical', that's not what we're interested in at all! But the Labour party does at least have the means of offering support, facilities and a network which single-issue campaigns lack.

Isn't it important not to belittle people's participation in single-issue campaigns?

Oh yes, certainly. I support and am getting more and more involved in those sorts of campaigns but at the same time I do think it would be good if there could be some sort of organisation which could link them all together to actually pursue common goals.

You've mapped out two objectives for Red Wedge; firstly, constructing a dialogue with the Labour party; and secondly, building a network to link together different campaigns and groups. How will Red Wedge seek to involve young people in its own organisation?

At the moment we're ironing out the final details about how to set up Red Wedge in the regions, what Red Wedge can do on a local basis. We want to get away from the big venues and into village halls, and places like that. We have to work out how Red Wedge can both support and stimulate cultural activities all around the country.

Have you joined the Labour party?

No. I was on the point of it, but I decided not to. For a long time I wanted to be more politically active, especially last year after being involved in Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners, but I don't want to join the Labour party how, I want my political involvement to be in Red Wedge because I can see it as far more constructive than joining the Labo party.

So how would you describe your politic standpoint now?

I would describe myself as a marxist, ar the marxist analysis of the world is the o I personally subscribe to. But, at the san time you have to be aware of the chang in the last hundred years which have be *so* enormous. The basic premises are st true but the structure of society h changed so rapidly, politics and cultu must take account of those changes.

OPENING UP THE AIRWAVES

Richard Dyer

To those who don't listen to it, Radio Two is generally thought of as a wash of muzak. It's assumed that it consists of nothing but music and mindless connecting chat, and that it's the wrong sort of music to boot. The other radio stations have their champions. Radio Four and the World Service may be the voice of the establishment, but at least they're *serious* and even a bit pink round the edges; Radio Three may be elitist, but still it is making great music and deep thoughts available if not exactly accessible; local radio, commercial and BBC, is, well, local and at its best responsive to regional and grassroots interests; and Radio One is *young*, say no more. But Radio Two is just muzak, muzak, muzak . . .

The first misconception to scotch is the idea that there is nothing but music on R2. It certainly is the case that most of the programming is organised around music. The sprinkling of comedy and quiz shows doesn't amount to more than three or four hours a week, and though I'm happy that such categories of programme be there, I find most of those currently on offer pretty dreadful. These are not the strengths of R2's provision of talk – far more interesting are the nature and variety of the talk in the music programmes themselves.

In some cases the chat between the music is pretty much like that on Radio One – an enthusiastic babble, a seemingly indefatigable wittering on. While in some cases (those who are on through the night, for instance) the announcers are unexceptionably indistinguishable the one from the other, in a few cases they amount to being 'personalities' in their own righ The egregiously-cute and drearily-sexi David Hamilton is one of these and t newly appointed Derek Jameson tak notions of personality to new levels eccentricity.

Terry Wogan is of course the mo celebrated example of the R2 personalit announcer, but Wogan was differer partly because he was wittier but al because he allowed the listeners in on t act, using their letters to him as t substance of his chat. Wogan and h listeners together specialised in a wonde fully funny mockery and self-mockery both everyday life and the media, ar were supremely witty about the media own version of everyday life, namely so opera.

Gloria Hunniford: her guests combine showbiz personalities and a shameless use of people selling their books.

Other R2 announcers have 'personalit too, but the main feature of the programmes is not their display themselves but their guests. Gloria Hu

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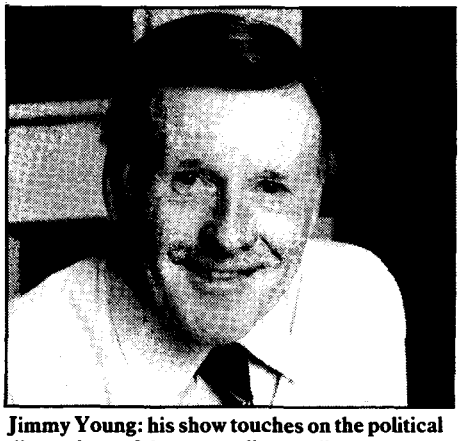
ord's programme most nearly approxi-
tes to the tv idea of a chat show, with
owbiz personalities and a shameless use
people selling their latest books or
earances. John Dunn also has some-
ng of this, but more appealingly also
a sort of 'general knowledge' remit –
ny of his guests are experts on the
tory of words, or folk customs, or the
nce of bee-keeping and so on. There is
air of 'fancy that' and 'well, I never' in
se interviews and a love of facts for
ir own sake, an engaging if limited
iosity about the world.

Brian Matthew is more squarely in the
rld of entertainment, but with the
inition stretched well beyond the usual
it show limits. He will have celebrity
sts on, but he'll also have people from
company of a Terence Rattigan revival
a provincial tour *and* the author and
oducer of a fringe theatre production
out black ghetto life *and* a baroque
itist *and* a has-been rock singer doing
rounds of the northern clubs.

Jimmy Young is different from all
se. His programme specialises in
rrent affairs' topics, but with the
tion of what affairs might be current in
eners' minds much wider than you get
the news. There will be coverage of the
dget, or airline disasters, or political
ndals, but the programme also draws
the kinds of topics dealt with by
oman's Hour and more recently *You and
urs*. If the news specialises in the public
here, then this other strand of 'current
airs' is more conscious of the private
here, and of the moral, social and
litical dimensions of that sphere. The
nmy Young Show doesn't exactly oper-
with the notion of 'the personal is
litical', but it is aware of issues that are
ore ongoing and everyday than the news
ndles; issues that tend to come pack-
ed as welfare, consumerism, health,
d so on, and that touch on the political
nensions of the way we live our lives.
ie research is excellent, the interviewing
hnique clear, managing to be challeng-
without being aggressive. Above all
programme lacks that 'boys' club'
nosphere of virtually all other current
airs programmes.

Radio Two is then not all music. Nor is
music muzak. On weekdays and
ough the night Radio Two does draw
adly on what record shops label as
sy listening', plus a sprinkling of
rrent chart hits. Particularly in the
enings and at weekends however, Radio
Two specialises in providing something approaching the gamut of popular musical tastes – and this is something which the recent changes in programming have emphasised.

Radio Two has programmes devoted to string orchestras, brass bands, big bands, dance bands and the electric organ; to hymns, choral singalongs, and parlour balladry; to pre-50s 78s, 50s standards, and 60s pop; to folk, country, rhythm and blues and folk rock; to operetta, musical comedy, and film music; to jazz (all periods) and jazz funk. To outsiders some



Jimmy Young: his show touches on the political dimensions of the way we live our lives

of these distinctions may seem positively arcane – big bands as opposed to dance bands? folk *and* folk rock?

Radio Two does not of course play absolutely all kinds of music. You won't find the outer reaches of 'contemporary' music, whether it be 12-tone classical or avant-garde jazz, and it tends to borrow from the softer end of Radio One and Radio Three's spectra. More notably absent are non-Western popular music traditions, especially those from the Indian sub-continent. There is certainly a popular audience in this country for such music and it is probably rather larger than that for the electric organ or even rhythm and blues. It is surprising too that steel bands and gospel have not found a regular home on R2. The popular, but not rock-related, musics of British ethnic minorities are an obvious gap in what seems to be R2's project, namely, programming which does not so much maximise the number of people listening at any one time as maximise the range of audiences for popular music.

Radio Two is popular in a sense that sometimes gets forgotten about in discussions of popular culture. Frequently when we say that such-and-such is 'popular' we mean that it is what most people listen to. In this sense Radio Two is not as popular as Radio One. But this is a mass market definition of popularity, concerned solely with numbers of people all buying the same thing. Another definition of 'popular' suggests things that are 'of the people' – in this sense, popular culture is what people themselves produce rather than what centralised media produce for them. Such culture can be romanticised or patronised – there is much to be said for the professionalism and material resources deployed by the mass media; and I am not in any case about to make the case that R2 is grassroots radio.

Nonetheless Radio Two does operate somewhere between these two ideas of the popular, recognising in effect that even if people do not necessarily produce music themselves they do select from what is available, do have particular enthusiasms and sensibilities that are not expressed in the mass hits. It's not that lovers of jazz, folk, show tunes, brass bands or whatever else do not also like the mass hits, it is just that there are different and particular communities of popular musical taste and it is these that Radio Two speaks to. I've already indicated the forms in which the range of such communities is circumscribed, in ways highly politically significant in multi-ethnic Britain. But the principle of going for the range and variety of popular taste should form part of socialist thinking about the shape and structure of *broadcasting*.

The fact is that we suffer the most extraordinarily restricted radio service in this country. In any of the large cities of the USA, you know which station to tune into, at any time of the day, for the kind of music you want. France since Mitterrand has an even more open radio system, with full-time ethnic and political minority stations. This opening up of the airwaves should be a central demand of a socialist media policy. Yet there is also something to learn from the example of Radio Two. You can get the music you want on US radio, provided the music you want is one of a much more limited number of options than R2 offers. Equally, it is unlikely that any radio station could survive providing only one of the enormous range of popular musics Radio Two makes available. Radio Two suggests the way that broadcasting within the public service model can protect popular cultures, provided that it operates with a concept of popular cultural communities rather than with the mass market definition of popularity.

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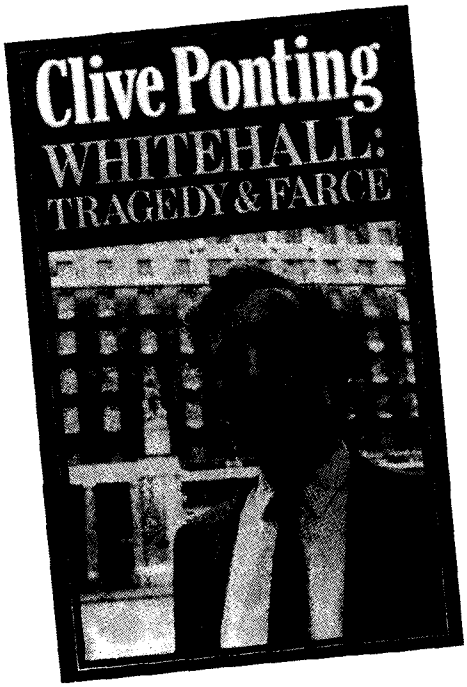

Officially Secret

Whitehall: Tragedy and Farce
Clive Ponting
Hamish Hamilton £9.95

What do Tony Benn, Institute of Directors' head Sir John Hoskyns, journalist Peter Kellner and ex-permanent secretary Sir Frank Cooper have in common? Answer: they have all slated Whitehall and its methods. Clive Ponting, whose 15 year career in the civil service ended abruptly with prosecution under the Official Secrets Act, now joins this club.

His thesis is that Britain is appallingly governed and the blame lies with politicians and top mandarins. Much of the book retraces the ground covered by other critics but Ponting argues his case trenchantly, backing it up with examples from Crossman's and Castle's diaries and from his own experience. Ministers are accused of an obsession with personal and short-term political gain. Their work-load is excessive and they do not begin to understand complex topics such as the rate support grant. Their concept of long-term planning is at best five years' ahead (the next election).

Most of the book, however, deals with the senior civil service. Entrance to the 'fast-stream' is biased towards the male Oxbridge arts graduate. Training is mainly on-the-job and therefore informal and unsystematic. The skills that are valued are those of 'administration'; for instance the ability to write elegant English, 'to draft round' a problem, or to chair a meeting to achieve a compromise between competing interests.

Technical expertise is disregarded, so senior civil servants are given responsibility for multi-billion pounds of defence contracts without any financial training, or for extensive new technology projects without having ever worked with computers. Furthermore, alleges Ponting, senior civil servants are conservative and conventional, living in their own world which is dominated by public school values. Official secrecy and parliament's inability to scrutinise the executive means there are no effective pressures for change.

The book's last chapter proposes some remedies, including freedom of information legislation and a strengthened cabinet office to put a stop to inter-departmental feuding. Ponting also advocates that the executive functions of departments (such as the prison service and benefit payments) should be hired off to agencies. Ministers and mandarins would then be free to concentrate on strategic planning.

Many of Ponting's charges carry conviction. Nevertheless his tendency to over-egg the pudding sometimes leaves a feeling of intellectual unease. Thus to support his contention that top mandarins patronise the middle ranks, he quotes a permanent secretary's statement in 1955. If that is the only evidence he can find, this particular accusation should be dropped. To show that the civil service has not brought in professionally qualified accountants in significant numbers he uses 1979 figures, when those for 1985 (which are double the 1979 figures) are available.

It is, however, Ponting's failure to deal with the role of the civil service unions that will most undermine his credibility in progressive quarters. This failure is surprising as union membership is high, there are well developed procedures for negotiation and consultation, and the unions have pressed for many of the changes Ponting espouses, such as freedom of informaiton and a code of ethics. Moreover the few passing references there are to the unions are questionable. Thus he castigates the civil service head for delaying the implementation of the Fulton report in 1968 by consulting the unions. Yet joint consultation was then an integral element of the government's approach as an employer.

Ponting also takes the view that the five-month civil service strike in 1981 failed because civil servants 'refused to take radical action'. His former colleagues, however, might say that comment reveals more about Clive Ponting than about the strike.

But perhaps the book's biggest shortcomings are its lack of an index, its several typographical errors and last but not least its lack of humour. Those who want their side-swipes at the civil service applied with a lighter touch are advised to watch the tv series *Yes Prime Minister*.

Sue Corby

Double Marginality

An End to Laughter? Tribal peoples and economic development
Survival International Annual Review £4.95

Survival International is a group that lobbies on behalf of tribal peoples. Its annual review, *An End to Laughter*, is a collection of essays documenting seven such peoples, all having different levels of integration into the country within whose boundaries they exist.

The peoples described in the book, from Africa, Latin America and India, are united by a cluster of shared characteristics: they are generally hunter-gatherers or slash-and-burn farmers, with small-scale,

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kinship-based social organisation, relatively egalitarian, producing for subsistence; they are tenuously (or lopsidedly) integrated into the state, and possess distinctive religions and cultures.

Although peasants have become dear to the hearts of the Left, tribal peoples remain marginalised (except where they figure as obstacles to national or class unity). There are two conflicting marxist interpretations of the position of tribal peoples. One view holds that tribal peoples retain a self-sufficient mode of production without class exploitation, whereas peasants are locked into relations of structured inferiority within the state and world economy. The second view argues that class relations exist even in simple tribal societies. This debate continues in academic circles and in indigenous organisations in Latin America and elsewhere in the Third World. The issue is important for the working out of left development strategies, and the questions that arise deserve wider discussion.

For example, can it be taken for granted that tribal peoples will inevitably assume the situation of peasants, or is there something distinctive about them? Do we know enough about how tribal peoples see their own situation? And are left development strategies sufficiently conscious of the need to avoid the kind of unthinking resource exploitation which imperils groups such as the Amazonian Indians?

For all tribal groups self-determination is dependent on the extent to which they can retain control of their rights to the land: it is here that their interests most obviously conflict with those of the state. The essays suggest a desperate race for tribal peoples to achieve self-determination through the growth of their political consciousness and their own political organisation, before the tide of 'modernisation' (destruction of the environment, disease, debt) sweeps them away.

There are signs that tribal peoples are gaining a voice. Sofia Painiqueo, a Mapuche Indian leader, toured Britain last year. Describing the history of oppression suffered by the Mapuche and the part they now play in the resistance to Pinochet, she nevertheless made it clear that the Mapuche struggle is autonomous and not to be simply subsumed within the resistance of the Left in Chile. The Mapuche predicament is one of those presented in this collection.

The powerlessness of the tribals with regard to the state takes many forms. They are victims of cultural supremacist ideologies; they face economic pressure to sell their labour on the market; their political organisations are persecuted. In Namibia, as described in this book, the Ju-/Wasi have become exhibits in game parks.

Although they are minorities within the countries in which they live, there are nevertheless often large numbers of tribal people. A chain of hydro-electric projects stretching across a vast area of central India, for example, threatens 2m people with the loss of their lands. Survival International castigates the Indian government for lack of concern, and makes the important point that tribal use of land is by no means always wasteful nor modern land use always beneficial to the majority.

The essays are well-researched and persuasive. The most controversial article is undoubtedly the one on Nicaragua, which makes a case for an immediate settlement of the Miskitos' land claim: this amounts, in fact, to more than one-third of Nicaragua's territory. The article quotes selectively and betrays a naive attitude towards the Indian leadership (ignoring, for instance, the wrecking role of the Miskito leader and former CIA agent, Steadman Fagoth). It underplays the US role in the military sphere, in disinformation campaigns, and in frustrating peace talks between the Sandinista government and the Misurasata organisation. It fails to mention that the Miskitos have returned to their Rio Coco homelands; nor does it refer to the many thousand Miskitos detained in Contra camps in Honduras, unable to return. The essay acknowledges the historical origins of misunderstanding and the willingness of the Sandinistas to accept criticism of the 1982 relocation of the Miskitos, yet still makes a harsh – and unfair – judgment. To the present autonomy proposals, Survival International offers criticism, not encouragement.

This narrowly indigenist treatment in fact reveals a weakness of the book: the lack of an overview or general model for understanding just how ethnicity, class and politics intersect. Without such a model, we are left with a depressing catalogue of injustices, and with little idea about what the practical options are for tribal peoples; in fact these peoples may yet build on their cultural distinctiveness to escape their double-marginality.

Julian Jacobs

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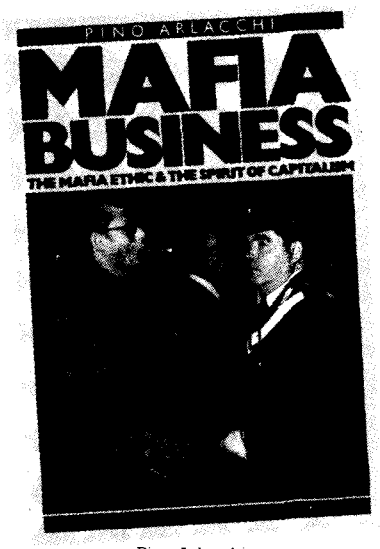

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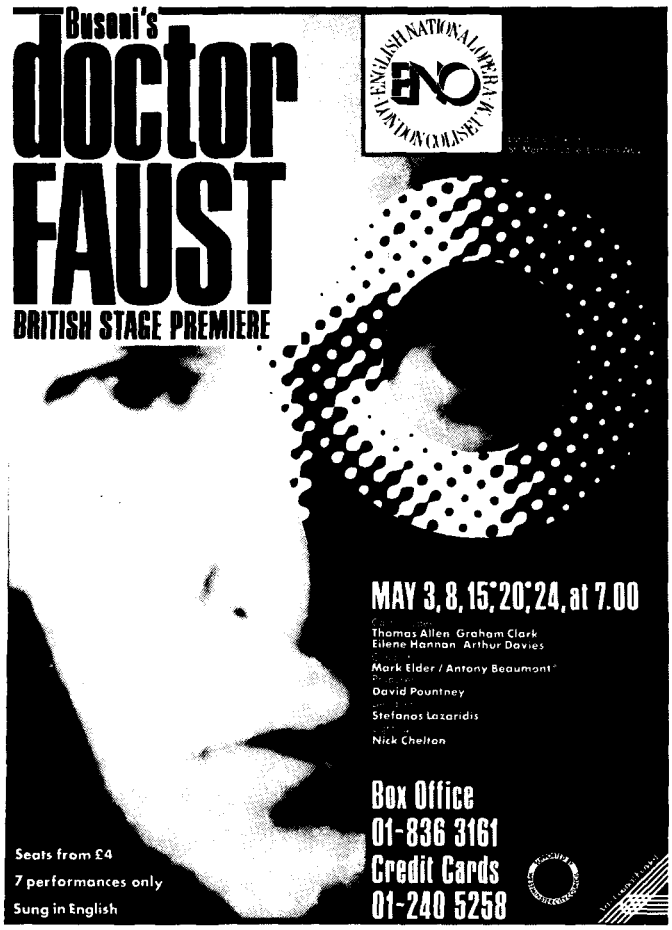

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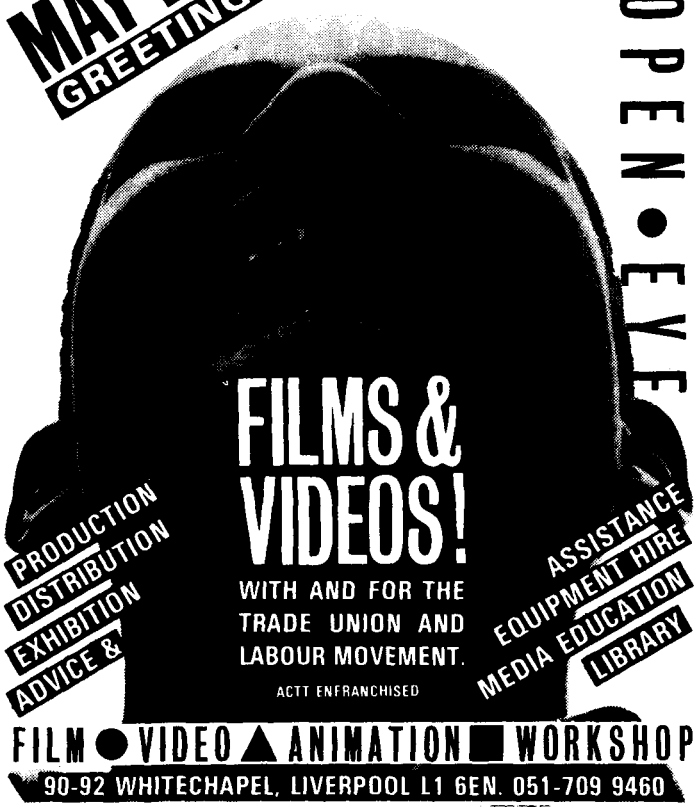

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Union

TEACHERS' I

TEACHERS' FALLOUT

It was not the best of days for the Education Secretary. Having just flown in from the United States, where he is rumoured to be courting, he went straight to the NAS/UWT teachers' conference to be greeted by a censorious wall of silence, news of an earlier deeply offensive stunt likening his effect on schools to that of AIDS ('Did they really do that?' he asked reporters incredulously) and the inevitable question from the *Daily Mail* education correspondent: 'How's your love life, Sir Keith?'

When you have suffered for the sake of education as much as Sir Keith Joseph thinks he has, such trials are almost routine. More illuminating was his erroneous assumption, expressed repeatedly that day and after, that the decision of the NUT's own Easter conference to carry on teaching O-Level and CSE courses from September, instead of the planned GCSE, had been orchestrated by the union's executive to further the teachers' salaries campaign. In fact, it had been carried against the executive's express wishes.

An Education Secretary incomprehending and bewildered at the anger of teachers; union leaders struggling to harness their members' militancy – these are the legacies of the 13-month pay dispute in schools in England and Wales and the even longer, and more successful, campaign in Scotland.

Joseph looks set soon to leave office still puzzled and hurt by it all. But leaders of the NUT and NAS/UWT, the two TUC-affiliated unions together representing three-quarters of all state school teachers, face the problem of holding members in check for now but then mobilising them again later this year if, as is widely expected, there is failure in the long-term salaries and contract talks going on at Acas.

Not that all teachers are straining at the leash: there has undoubtedly been a significant drift to AMMA and PAT, the two non-TUC classroom teachers' unions which took no strike action. Derby-based PAT, committed never to strike and enjoying close links with other breakaway unions such as the UDM (miners), is now claiming 40,000 members and offers highly attractive membership benefits which the traditional unions must match if they are to stop the rot.

By far the bigger trend, though, has been the way many teachers have been radicalised by the pay struggle. The NUT is a strongly centralist union but it was clear at its conference that the executive, having spent a year or more inciting the troops to mutiny, was finding it hard to get them back to barracks. Pressure from the floor pushed through not only the GCSE decision, but also a call for merger talks with NAS/UWT, and came very close to passing a policy of no cover for absent colleagues.

Although the NUT executive remains firmly in the grip of the semi-covert centre-left broad alliance group, dominated by forceful male head teachers, conference this year, for perhaps the first time, saw the Socialist Teachers' Alliance winning wide support on several issues.

The notoriously less-than-progressive NAS/UWT, meanwhile, faces greater difficulties: because it ordered disruptive action (without pre-strike ballots) but then led the smaller unions to force a settlement of the pay dispute against the NUT's opposition, it is losing members both ways. Logic, and the effective links forged at local level during the past year, point to the wisdom of an NUT-NAS/UWT merger being agreed as soon as possible. For one thing, a united 350,000-strong organisation would stop PAT, AMMA and the two head teachers' associations exercising disproportionate influence in negotiations.

But the great obstacle to merger remains the constant squabbling between the NUT and NAS/UWT leaderships: headmaster Norman Willis sees them in his TUC study often enough to know they are more likely to continue bringing discredit on the school than shake hands and become bosom pals.

David Brindle

FREEDOM TO KILL

In October 1983 five women were burnt alive in a clothing sweatshop in East London. The firm was not registered with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) n with the London Fire Brigade. It h never been inspected. The 12 women w worked in this sweatshop, a converted f above a betting shop, faced unimaginat health and safety conditions including ba on all the windows.

In late 1985 Lord Young, Minister f Employment, sat down to lunch wi several prominent businessmen who we pressing him to take action on a health a safety issue dear to their hearts.

What links these two events? Answe deregulation.

These two events offer us two differe views of the same world. This horrific fi in the East End sweatshop gives us window on to a world of work in the 198(which is already deregulated in practice. is a world of small unregistered wor places, of non-unionised workforce (i cluding children), of conditions whi break basic health and safety standards, unreported accidents and of unclaim benefits.

The lunch with Lord Young offers us instant insight into the topsy-turvy wor of Tory politics. The government wou like to give deregulation of health a safety laws the official seal of approval. T bring it out of the closet and create a virt out of the freedom to kill workers. As result of the dinner yet one more 'stud has been commissioned by the minister employment to be carried out by t Enterprise and Deregulation Unit. Its pu pose is to provide a so-called scientif basis to the idea that health and safe legislation is a burden on business.

There has been no clear indication fro Lord Young what actions he intends take to deregulate when he gets t answers he's looking for in the late survey. The 'Lifting the Burden' whi paper suggested moving the limit on pr ducing a safety policy up from 5 to employees. Precisely what health and saf ty laws and regulations or what size business will be targetted for exemption anybody's guess.

Powerful, political and economic forc combine to maintain the present unti inadquate state of affairs including: sm employers who are ignorant of or delibe ately ignore safe health and safety sta

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OUT PLUS Deregulation of work | Scene

rds; drastic cutbacks in the HSE's Fac-y Inspectorate since 1979; a continuing ıjor shortfall in the HSE's own re-ırces; an absence of any campaign to :rease the registration of small em-›yers; the growth of small-scale employ-:nt; and the complete inadequacy of ;al penalties against offending em-›yers.

The end result of these forces, made all : more potent during the Thatcher ımp years, has been an increase in the elihood that workers will be injured or led at work – while the likelihood that ıployers will be prosecuted has de-:ased.

Between 1981 and 1984 the incidence e of *reported* death and major injuries nt up by 24% in manufacturing and 42% construction. Over the same period the mber of incidents investigated by the ;E Inspectors fell by 34%. The chance of ›se employers who do register with the HSE being inspected was once in every seven years in 1983. It's likely to be a much rarer event today.

From the trade union perspective Lord Young's initiative is either downright mad or malevolent. It even makes little sense for employers. Those firms not covered by Lord Young's proposed exceptions will find themselves under-cut by their rivals making extra short-term profits at the cost of their workers health and safety. But in the long term, as many reputable studies demonstrate, firms which take health and safety seriously, which integrate it into their management systems and go beyond the strict letter of the law in setting standards, are likely to be more efficient and cost effective. Accidents, injuries and deaths at work cost firms dearly. If Lord Young's initiative goes ahead we will all be the losers.

It is a sad commentary that most British trade unions have chosen to commit few resources to preventative health and safety services for their members in comparison to their European counterparts. Opinion polls show that these services are accorded top priority by members and potential members. Health and safety is a recruitment and 'subs' winner. A new approach, and initiative, is now required in this area.

The GMB, in its paper on deregulation[1], puts forward 10 basic proposals for action to achieve a 'new deal' on workplace health and safety. Many of these points will be incorporated into the Labour party's new 'Charter on the Working Environment'. This at least, is an important start.

Dave Gee and Jake Jackson

[1] A copy of 'This Freedom to Kill: Response to Deregulation in the Workplace' can be obtained from GMBATU, Thorne House, Ruxley Ridge, Claygate, Esher, Surrey KT10 0TL, price £2.

After the local elections

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- Michael Ball argues that this crisis is rooted in the current institutional structure of home-ownership provision. If this structure is not drastically reformed, the next few years could spell disaster.
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- 'A radical restructuring of owner-occupation on the lines proposed might seem a tall order' concludes Michael Ball, 'but the extent of the current structural crisis, and the almost zero effect of more limited reforms, make it essential'.

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Update

NEWS

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ace It Together is a national Christ- as card competition. Anyone be- een 7-18 yrs is invited to design ristmas cards expressing a message peace for the young in Central nerica. Application forms must be by May 30. Details Emily Ryan Tel. -631 4200.

MEETINGS

rmingham *Marxism Today* Discus- on Group meets first Sunday of the onth 7.30pm Star Club, 25 Essex reet. Pete Ackers on 'Realignment the Left', May 4, Tel. 021 692 1765.

e Prospects for the Left Speakers: n Livingstone and Martin Jacques, ne 5, 7.30pm at Anson Rd School, son Rd, Willesden, London NW2. A *arxism Today* meeting organised by illesden branch Communist party. ntact Eric Boon 01-452 3171.

ntre for Caribbean Studies Discus- on Forum 86, May 7, 2nd congress of e Cuban CP: John Griffiths; May 14 ban planning in Kingston, Jamaica: lene Dixon; May 21 'The role of the ate in the creation of a racist Bri- in': Clive Haris; May 28, the Bristol s boycott of 1963: Madge Dresser.

CONFERENCES

al History and Labour History Con- rence Talks and workshops on com- unity, socialist, women's, labour d oral history methods. May 2-4 at ational Museum of Labour History, nehouse, East London. £8 waged, low waged, £2 unwaged. Details b Little/Bob Ryder, 36 Overbury use, Overbury St, London E5 0BH, l. 01-533 0828.

EVENTS

lidarity with the Printworkers nefit with speakers Bill French, FOC A the *Times*, Tricia Davis CP; omen's cabaret. May 2, 7.30pm, ar Club, 25 Essex St, Birmingham.

ke Ride for Nicaragua Nicaragua lidarity Campaign is holding its first ajor cycle ride between London and ford to raise £10,000 towards a ntainer of bicycles for Nicaragua. ay 3. Details, Tel. 01-354 0844.

ructural Change 'What role for the ade unions and the impact of new chnology.' A Conference of Social- Economists dayschool. Panel of ade union speakers: David Wield, ephen Smith and Sonja Reuhl. May , 10.30-4.30, University of London nion, Malet St, London WC1. De- ils: 25 Horsell Rd, London N5, Tel. -607 9615.

Room for Your Dreams! Feminist visions of socialism. An event to explore our visions. May 17 10-5.30 at Swarthmore Centre, Woodhouse Sq, Leeds 3. £2.50 (£1.50) lunch available. Organised by Yorkshire District CP. Contact Lynette, 10 Quarry Mt Tce, Leeds 6 or Claire 0532 435150 or Julie 0532 743842. Creche. Disabled access not very good but help available.

Star Wars and European Independence END dayschool. Speakers: Richard Ennals, Salman Rushdie, EP Thomson, Mary Kaldor. May 24, 10-5, Sidings Community Centre, 150 Brassey Rd, London NW6. £3 waged, £1.50 unwaged. Registrations END, 11 Goodwin St, London N4 3HQ. Tel. 01-272 9092.

Moving Left Loughborough socialist forum's festival. Speakers include Martin Jacques and Stuart Weir. Topics include 'Leisure and the Left', 'What's Happening to the Left?' and sexual politics. Stalls, theatre, cabaret, disco. May 31, 1pm-midnight. St Peter's social centre, Stover Rd, Loughborough. Contact Ray Sutton, Loughborough 262119.

Women Alive South Bank Polytechnic, Borough Rd, London SE1. July 5-6. Tickets £12 waged, £6 unwaged (day tickets also). Details,

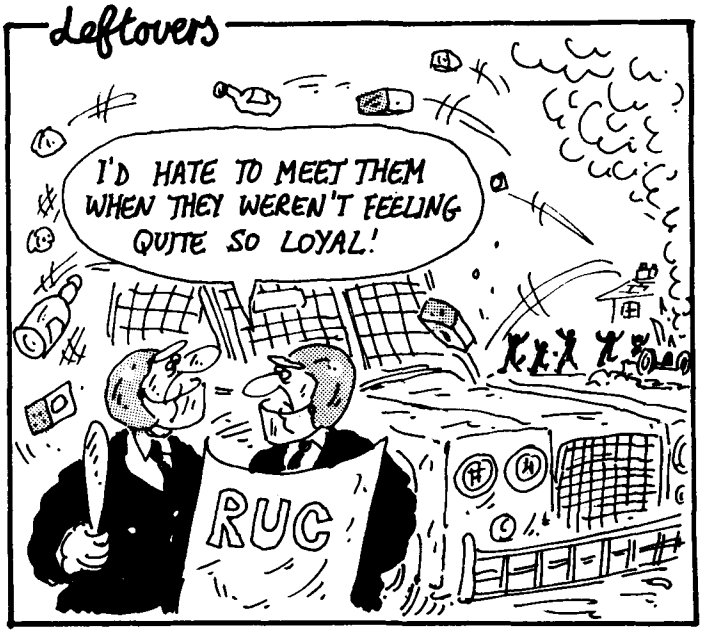
No Pasaran: Photographs and posters of the Spanish civil war. First exhibition of its kind in Britain. Includes 20 posters from the Institut Municipal d'Historia de Barcelona. Until 4 May at Arnolfini Gallery, Narrow Quay, Bristol, BS1 4QA 0272 299191.

PUBLICATIONS

Neighbourhood Watch: Policing the People is the first independent report on this police scheme, and is based on a two-year study of neighbourhood watch schemes in the metropolitan police area. Available from The Libertarian Research and Education Trust, 9 Poland St, London W1, Tel. 01-434 4220.

The Animal Liberation Movement outlines the aims of the animal liberation movement asking what animal rights are and how they can best be achieved. Published by Old Hammond Press, 19 Hengerhill Rd, St Anns, Nottingham, England.

'Guide to the Met' provides information to enable Londoners to understand how the Metropolitan police is organised and how the Met spends their money as citizens and ratepayers. It is hoped that it will inform discussions on policing issues. Published by the GLC Police Committee Support Unit. Available from Policing Research Group, Central London Strategic Policy Unit, Middlesex House, 20 Vauxhall Bridge Rd, London SW1.



Women's Pay: Claiming Equal Value is the most comprehensive survey of the impact of the new equal pay for work of equal value legislation. Available from Labour Research Dept, 78 Blackfriars Rd, London SE1 8HF. Tel. 01-928 3649.

A New Deal for Britain's Poor is a broadsheet launched jointly by Child Poverty Action Group and the Low Pay Unit. It reveals the extent and depth of the poverty crisis by drawing together the latest facts and figures and puts forward a range of measures which would represent a 'new deal for Britain's Poor'. Available at 50p from CPAG, 1 Macklin St, London WC2B 5NH.

VIDEOS

Wendy Savage on Video An hour-long video featuring Wendy Savage on 'Choices in Childbirth – the Next 10 Years'. Produced by Central Manchester National Childbirth Trust. Available from NCT Tapes, 76 Humphrey Road, Old Trafford, Manchester M16 9DG at £17.50.

Entries for the June Update should be sent to the office by May 9. For information: tel Diane Dixon on 01-965 7482 (evenings) or 608 0265 (day). Please try to ensure you state how accessible the venue is for people with disabilities.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Fred Halliday is professor of international relations at the London School of Economics.
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Paud Haggerty is active in the gay liberation movement and works at Gays The Word bookshop.
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CLOSE • UP

ON

Alice Walker

Pratibha Parmar

In June British audiences will get the opportunity to see Steven Spielberg's Hollywood adaptation of Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*. It is ironic that, at a time when there is a resurgence of the civil rights movement in the USA under the leadership of Jesse Jackson and through the Rainbow Coalition, a novel about the myriad oppression of Southern black people, in particular women, has become the subject for a Hollywood production.

While Alice Walker is already widely acclaimed as a writer, this film will mark an unprecedented move to redress the hitherto cultural marginalisation of black women's lives. Such an opportunity is rare. But then again, Alice Walker is an exceptional woman.

Alice Walker's mother must have had great foresight. When her daughter left home, one of the things she gave her was a typewriter. This precious gift not only helped Alice Walker, poet, novelist, essayist and winner of the 1983 Pulitzer prize for fiction, to escape the harsh poverty of her birthplace, Eatonton in Georgia, but set her on a path which made her one of the most universally-known black woman writers this century.

Indeed, Alice Walker, one of eight children and a daughter of share croppers who lived on a farm in the Deep South in the 1950s grew up as part of a strong, resilient and resourceful black community. It is this sense of community which she recognises and acknowledges as her rightful heritage as a black Southern writer. 'In large measure, black Southern writers owe their clarity of vision to parents who refused to diminish themselves as human beings by succumbing to racism', she says.

The richness of her early experiences both in the South and in the civil rights movement are evident in her writings, which consist of three volumes of poetry, two collections of stories, three novels and one collection of essays. Like her, many of her fictional characters are based in the South. For instance, in her first novel, *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, the central character, Ruth Copeland, a young black girl, is based in rural Georgia. This story, which focuses on the spiritual and physical devastation that occurs when the family trust is violated, is a recurrent theme in Walker's writings. In this she represents a significant departure from the Afro-American male literary tradition.

Whereas the social confrontations between black and white society were often the central concern of writers such as Richard Wright, Walker's writings concentrate instead on the internal dynamics of relationships between black people with the white world appearing as a backdrop.

Alice Walker's writings have come under fire from many critics, for raising the taboo subjects of incest, child abuse and sexual violence, although she is not alone in doing so. Toni Morrison and Ralph Ellision, have tackled these issues too. Far from perpetuating racist stereotypes of black men as violent and tyrannical, Walker confronts their actions in the necessary historical context of the brutilising effects of racial and economic violence on black men.

Her writings are a direct political challenge to pervasive theories both in the US and Britain which propound a pathology of black family life. Through a popular and easily-accessible genre she defines the terms on which black people themselves address familial and gender relationships.

The Color Purple begins with stark descriptions of the sexual violence done to a nearly illiterate female black child by her stepfather. Celia, the child, subsequently writes this down in her own language. Many critics, particularly in California, have objected to this 'exposure' of black folk language and attempted to have it banned. But Walker defends it vehemently: 'Celia's speech reveals what has been done to her by a racist and sexist system, and her intelligent blossoming as a human being, despite her oppression, demonstrates why her oppressors persist even today in trying to keep her down.'

One of Alice Walker's greatest contributions is precisely this: portraying black women's self-determination to not merely survive severe racism, sexism and economic exploitation, but to maintain human dignity in the face of such formidable odds.

As with Celia, Alice Walker shows black women surviving in creative and imaginative ways manifested through their art – art in Walker's definition embraces black women who not only wrote slave narratives but also those who sang as they toiled the land of the slave master and those who made patchwork-quilts documenting their struggle with needle and thread.

History plays a prominent role for Alice Walker; she feels passionately about the significance of her people's past; particularly the very real need to keep alive the lineage of black women writers, their names, words and actions so that 'future generations will not stumble in the dark, over ground we should have covered'.

As a scholarship student at a prestigious white college, Alice Walker did not hear one word about early black women writers and so, in her characteristically pioneering way, she decided that one of her first tasks was simply to determine whether they had existed. She has since gone on to do much more than verify their existence, she has made other black women writers visible. For she says, 'We are a people. A people do not throw away their geniuses. And if they are thrown away, it is our duty as artists and as witnesses for the future to collect them again for the sake of our children, and if necessary, bone by bone.'

Alice Walker has gone on to do much more than collect forgotten black geniuses: she is a woman who has also taken many risks. One such risk is to agree to have Steven Spielberg direct her film. Already reports from the USA suggest that the film butchers the spirit of black women's strength and sensual love for each other, so sensitively portrayed in the book. No doubt, either, that Alice Walker will be severely criticised for her apparent uncritical support for Steven Spielberg's interpretation. But whatever the critics say, it cannot diminish the fact that Alice Walker remains one of the most visionary black women writers to emerge in recent years.

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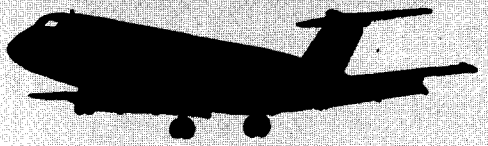

All Brochure Holidays

All operators skiing, cruise and summer package holidays, and all air and ferry tickets, can be booked promptly and efficiently with the help of our computerised system. This system can now locate ultra-bargain offers for those able to take advantage of un-sold seats by travelling at short notice. Please call in or phone for any details or brochures you require.

The far horizon South America

Nicaragua

In association with the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign and "New Socialist" 1986 programme now available includes 17-day study tours at £798 departing 24th April and 5th June (with health workers tour.) All tours are fully inclusive and guided, with visits and meetings in Managua, Massaya, Esteli, Leon and Granada. Further tours between July and December are in preparation, and there are opportunities to join work brigades and specialist groups travelling with us through the N.S.C. New programme combining 2 week study tour and 2 weeks work project now available in August.
General or special interest programmes arranged at any time for groups (min. 10 people) or on an individual basis.

Cuba

1986 programme of study and holiday tours available. Group tours including Spanish language studies for any party of 10 or more and individual tours providing initial hotel booking in Havana, plus free range internal travel or car hire can be arranged at any time. Individual tours can be arranged at any time. New charter-based tours planned to commence in November.

Trans-Siberian to China and Japan

Independent or group travel, in co-operation with China National Youth Travel Corporation, via Moscow and trans-Siberian rail or air routes to Mongolia, Beijing or Tokyo, returning via Hong Kong or continuing to Australia or the US West Coast. From £265 one way to Beijing. 5 major tours of 18-21 days duration are planned for 1985 to Beijing, central, south and south-western China, returning from Hong Kong.

City breaks

Regular one-week and weekend holidays in Moscow and Leningrad, Budapest and Prague from £195 inc. Wide range of other Western European city visits – from Paris £79 by air to only £55 for coach weekends.

Specialist travel

We specialise in organising group study tours and holidays with a purpose for student, labour movement or school groups, particularly to the USSR and Eastern Europe, Algeria, France, Italy and Cuba. Phone or write to Paco Norall or Landon Temple for details.

Russian language courses in the USSR

1986 Programme one month vacation courses. In July, in Moscow Kalinin, Leningrad, Minsk, Kharkov and Volgograd; in August, in Moscow and Leningrad and in September at Krasnodar. Winter courses include Moscow in November/December, Leningrad over Christmas and New Year and new courses planned for Yalta for October and at Leningrad University for January and February 1987.
Kiev Summer Course. 13th April-27th June. Extra places are now available on the 3 months programme at Kiev. Some places are now available on this 3 months programme on a late-entry basis.

SPECIAL OFFERS ●

PARIS.
Fete de l'Humanite. 12th–15th September by coach to Paris for the great left-wing festival. Returning via Reims with a wine tasting in Champagne. £63.
SOVIET UNION
Summer Bargain in Moscow and Leningrad. 6 days in the 2 great Soviet cities, by air, 22nd–28th August. Full board and programme from only £248.
Volga River Cruises. 2 outstanding visits combining flights with 3 days in Moscow, 3 days in Leningrad and then a relaxed river journey on the Volga through the heartland of Russia. From Kazan to Rostov. Depart 23rd June and 7th July. Various cabin arrangements from £615 per person.
May Day and Victory Day Tours. 26th April–3rd May, Moscow/Vladimir/Suzdal; 27th April–4th May, Leningrad/Talin/Moscow; 8th –13th May, Moscow/Vladimir/Suzdal. Prices from £238. Other departures for summer and October half-term, November celebrations and New Year.
Medical Exchange Programme. Two week visit for doctors and health workers in June and for medical students commencing late August. Details on request.
MARATHONS ABROAD. Following our 100-strong contingent to the Moscow marathon in August 1985, a programme of marathon and other tours for runners is available, including the US-USSR Goodwill Games Marathon (open to all comers) 3rd–14th July and Moscow Peace Marathon , 6th–14th August. From £365.

PENSIONERS FOR PEACE INTERNATIONAL
A new 1986 programme of PPI peace tours, renewing this year's visits to Romania and the USSR and extended to Italy, Spain, Hungary and other countries, is now available.

Specialist tour operator to the labour and student movements

Progressive Tours Ltd

12 Porchester Place, Marble Arch, London W2 2BS
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SATURDAY MAY 3rd CENTRAL HALL WESTMINSTER SW1

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